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The Dumb Ox

A Study of Ernest Hemingway

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ERNEST HEMINGWAY is a very considerable artist in prose-fiction. Besides this, or with this, his work possesses a penetrating quality, like an animal speaking. A quality in the work of the author of *Men Without Women* suggests that we are in the presence of a writer who is not merely a conspicuous chess-man in the big-business book-game of the moment, but something much finer than that. Let me attempt to isolate that quality for you, in such a way as not to damage it too much: for having set out to demonstrate the *political significance* of this artist's work, I shall, in the course of that demonstration, resort to a dissection of it—not the best way, I am afraid, to bring out the beauties of the finished product. This dissection is, however, necessary for my purpose here. "I have a weakness for Ernest Hemingway," as the egregious Miss Stein says: it is not agreeable to me to pry into his craft, but there is no help for it if I am to reach certain important conclusions.

But *political significance!* That is surely the last thing one would expect to find in such books as *In Our Time*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *Men Without Women*, or *A Farewell to Arms*. And indeed it is difficult to imagine a writer whose mind is more entirely closed to politics than is Hemingway's. I do not suppose he has ever heard of the Five-Year Plan, though I dare say he knows that artists pay no income tax in Mexico, and is quite likely to be following closely the agitation of the Mexican matadors to get themselves recognized as "artists" so that they may pay no income tax. I expect he has heard of Hitler, but thinks of him mainly, if he is acquainted with the story, as the Boche who went down into a cellar with another Boche and captured thirty Frogs and came back with an Iron Cross. He is interested in the sports of death, in the sad things that happen to those engaged in the sports of love—in sand-sharks and in Wilson-spoons—in war, but *not* in the things that cause war, or the people who profit by it, or in the ultimate human destinies involved in it. He lives, or affects to live, *submerged*. He is in the multitudinous ranks of *those to whom things happen*—terrible things of course, and of course stoically borne. He has never heard, or affects never to have heard, that there is another and superior element, inhabited by a type of unnatural men which preys upon that of the submerged type. Or perhaps it is not quite a submerged mankind to which he belongs, or affects to belong, but to something of the sort described in one of Faulkner's war stories:

> But after twelve years [Faulkner writes], I think of us as bugs in the surface of the water, isolant and aimless and unflagging. Not on the surface; in it, within that

line of demarcation not air and not water, sometimes submerged, sometimes not.

But—twelve, fifteen years afterwards—to be *submerged*, most of the time, is Hemingway's idea. It is a little bit of an *art pur* notion, but it is, I think, extremely effective, in his case. Hemingway has really taken up his quarters in the stupid medium of the sub-world, the *bêtise* of the herd, and has mastered the medium entirely, so that he is of it, and yet not of it, in a very satisfactory way.

Another manner of looking at it would be to say that Ernest Hemingway is the Noble Savage of Rousseau, but a white version, the simple American man. That is at all events the rôle that he has chosen, and he plays it with an imperturbable art and grace beyond praise.

II

To find a parallel to *In Our Time* or *A Farewell to Arms* you have to go to *Colomba* or to *Chronique du règne de Charles IX*: and in one sense Prosper Merimée supplies the historical key to these two ex-soldiers —married, in their literary craft, to a theatre of action *à l'outrance*. The scenes at the siege of La Rochelle in the *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* for instance: in the burning of the mill when the ensign is roasted in the window, that is the Hemingway subject-matter to perfection—a man melted in his armour like a shell-fish in its shell—melted lobster in its red armour.

S'ils tentaient de sauter par les fenêtres, ils tombaient dans les flammes, ou bien étaient reçus sur la pointe des piques. . . . Un enseigne, revêtu d'une armure complète, essaya de sauter comme les autres par une fenêtre étroite. Sa cuirasse se terminait, suivant une mode alors assez commune, par une espèce de jupon en fer qui couvrait les cuisses et le ventre, et s'élargissait comme le haut d'un entonnoir, de manière à permettre de marcher facilement. La fenêtre n'était pas assez large pour laisser passer cette partie de son armure, et l'enseigne, dans son trouble, s'y était précipité avec tant de violence, qu'il se trouva avoir la plus grande partie du corps en dehors sans pouvoir remuer, et pris comme dans un étau. Cependant les flammes montaient jusqu'à lui, échauffaient son armure, et l'y brûlaient lentement comme dans une fournaise ou dans ce fameux taureau d'airain inventé par Phalaris.

Compare this with the following:

We were in a garden at Mons. Young Buckley came in with his patrol from across the river. The first German I saw climbed up over the garden wall. We waited till he got one leg over and then potted him. He had so much equipment on and looked awfully surprised and fell down into the garden. Then three more came over further down the wall. We shot them. They all came just like that.

"In no century would Prosper Merimée have been a theologian or metaphysician," and if that is true of Merimée, it is at least equally true of his American prototype. But their "formulas" sound rather the same:

indifferent in politics . . . all the while he is feeding all his scholarly curiosity, his imagination, the very eye, with the, to him ever delightful, relieving, reassuring spectacle, of those straightforward forces in human nature, which are also matters of fact. There is the formula of Merimée! the enthusiastic amateur of rude, crude, naked force in men and women wherever it could be found . . . there are no half-lights. . . . Sylla, the false Demetrius, Carmen, Colomba, that impassioned self within himself, have no atmosphere. Painfully distinct in outline, inevitable to sight, unrelieved, there they stand, like solitary mountain forms on some hard, perfectly transparent day. What Merimée gets around his singularly sculpturesque creations is neither more nor less than empty space.

Thus Walter Pater on Merimée.

I have quoted the whole of the passage because it gives you "the formula", equally for the author of *Carmen* and of *The Sun Also Rises*—namely *the enthusiastic amateur of rude, crude, naked force in men and women*: but it also brings out very well, subsequently, the nature of the radical and extremely significant *difference* existing between these two men, of differing nations and epochs—sharing so singularly a taste for physical violence and for fine writing, but nothing else. Between them there is this deep gulf fixed: that gifted he of today is "the man that things are done to"—even the "I" in *The Sun Also Rises* allows his Jew puppet to knock him about and "put him to sleep" with a crash on the jaw, and this first person singular covers a very aimless, will-less person, to say the least of it: whereas that *he* of the world of *Carmen* (so much admired by Nietzsche for its bright Latin violence and directness—*la gaya scienza*) or of Corsican vendetta, he was in love with *will*, as much as with violence: he did not celebrate in his stories a spirit that suffered bodily injury and mental disaster with the stoicism of an athletic clown in a particularly brutal circus—or of oxen (however robust) beneath a crushing yoke: *he*, the inventor of Colomba, belonged to a race of men for whom action meant *their* acting, with all the weight and momentum of the whole of their being: *he* of post-Napoleonic France celebrated intense spiritual energy and purpose, using physical violence as a mere means to that only half-animal ideal. *Sylla*, *Demetrius*, *Colomba*, even *de Mergy*, summon to our mind a world bursting with purpose—even if always upon the personal and very animal plane, and with no more universal ends: while Hemingway's books, on the other hand, scarcely contain a figure who is not in some way futile, clown-like, passive, and above all *purposeless*. His world of men and women (*in violent action*, certainly) is completely empty of will. His puppets are leaves, *very violently* blown hither and thither; drugged or at least deeply intoxicated phantoms of a sort of matter-of-fact shell-shock.

In *A Farewell to Arms* the hero is a young American who has come over to Europe for the fun of the thing, as an alternative to baseball, to take part in the Sport of Kings. It has not occurred to him that it is no longer the sport of kings, but the turning-point in the history of the earth at which he is assisting, when men must either cease thinking like children and abandon such sports, or else lose their freedom for ever, much more effectively than any mere *king* could ever cause them to lose it. For him, it remains "war" in the old-fashioned semi-sporting sense. Throughout this ghastly event, he proves himself a thorough-going sport, makes several hairbreadth, Fenimore Cooper-like escapes, but never, from first to last, betrays a spark of intelligence. Indeed his physical stoicism, admirable as it is, is as nothing to his really heroic imperviousness to thought. This "war"–Gallipoli, Paschendaele, Caporetto–is just another "scrap". The Anglo-Saxon American–the "Doughboy"–and the Anglo-Saxon Tommy–join hands, in fact, outrival each other in a stolid determination absolutely to ignore, come what may, what all this is about. Whoever may be in the secrets of destiny–may indeed be destiny itself–*they* are not nor ever will be. They are an integral part of that world *to whom things happen*: they are not those who cause or connive at the happenings, and that is perfectly clear.

Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag. . . .
Smile boys, that's the style,

and *keep smiling*, what's more, from ear to ear, a *should-I-worry?* "good sport" smile, as do the Hollywood Stars when they are being photographed, as did the poor Bairnsfather "Tommy"–the "muddied oaf at the goal"–of all oafishness!

I hope this does not seem irrelevant to you: it is not, let me reassure you, but very much the contrary. The roots of all these books are in the War of 1914-18. The war-years were a democratic, a *levelling* school, and Hemingway comes from a pretty thoroughly "levelled" nation, where personality is the thing least liked. The rigid organization of the communal life as revealed in *Middletown*, for instance (or such a phenomenon as the NRA) is akin to the military state. So *will*, as expressed in the expansion of the individual, is not a thing we should expect to find illustrated by a deliberately typical American writer.

Those foci of passionate personal energy which we find in Merimée, we should look for in vain in the pages of Hemingway: in place of Don José or of Colomba we get a pack of drugged or intoxicated marionettes. These differences are exceedingly important.

So any attempt to identify "the formula" for Prosper Merimée with that of Ernest Hemingway would break down. You are led at once to a realization of the critical difference between these two universes of discourse: of how an appetite for the extremity of violence exists in both, but in one case, it is personal ambition, family pride, romantic love that are at stake, and their satisfaction is violently sought and undertaken, whereas in the other case purposeless violence, for the sake of the "kick", is pursued and recorded, and the "thinking subject" is to regard himself as nothing more significant than a ripple beneath the breeze upon a pond.

III

If we come down to the manner, specifically to the style, in which these sensational impressions are conveyed, again most interesting discoveries await us: for, especially with Mr. Hemingway, the story is told in the tone, and with the vocabulary, of the persons described. The rhythm is the anonymous folk-rhythm of the urban proletariat. Mr. Hemingway is, self-consciously, a folk-prose-poet in the way that Robert Burns was a folk-poet. But what is curious about this is that the modified *Beach-la-mar* in which he writes, is, more or less, the speech that is proposed for everybody in the future—it is a Volapuk which probably will be ours tomorrow. For if the chief executive of the United States greets the Roman Catholic Democratic leader (Al Smith) with the exclamation "Hallo old potato!" today, the English political leaders will be doing so the day after tomorrow. And the Anglo-Saxon *Beach-la-mar* of the future will not be quite the same thing as Chaucer or Dante, contrasted with the learned tongue. For the latter was the speech of a race rather than of a class, whereas our "vulgar tongue" will really be *vulgar*.

But in the case of Hemingway the folk-business is very seriously complicated by a really surprising fact. He has suffered an overmastering influence, which cuts his work off from any other, except that of his mistress (for his master has been a *mistress*!). So much is this the case, that their destinies (his and that of the person who so strangely hypnotized him with her repeating habits and her *faux-naïf* prattle) are for ever interlocked. His receptivity was so abnormally pronounced (even as a craftsman, this capacity for being *the person that things are done to* rather than the person who naturally initiates what is to be done to others, was so marked) and the affinity thus disclosed was found so powerful! I don't like speaking about this, for it is such a first-class complication, and yet it is in a way so irrelevant to the spirit which informs his work and must have informed it had he never made this apparently overwhelming "contact". But there it is: if you ask yourself how you would be able to tell a page of Hemingway, if it were unexpectedly placed before you, you would be compelled to answer, *Because it would be like Miss Stein!* And if you were asked how you would know it was not by Miss Stein, you would say, *Because it would probably be about prize-fighting, war, or the bull-ring, and*

Miss Stein does not write about war, boxing or bull-fighting!

It is very uncomfortable in real life when people become so captivated with somebody else's tricks that they become a sort of caricature or echo of the other: and it is no less embarrassing in books, at least when one entertains any respect for the victim of the fascination. But let us take a passage or two and get this over—it is very unpleasant. Let us take Krebs—the "he" in this passage is Krebs, a returned soldier in a Hemingway story:

> Now he would have liked a girl if she had come to him and not wanted to talk. But here at home it was all too complicated. He knew he could never get through it all again. It was not worth the trouble. That was the thing about French girls and German girls. There was not all this talking. You couldn't talk much and you did not need to talk. It was simple and you were friends. He thought about France and then he began to think about Germany. On the whole he liked Germany better. He did not want to leave Germany. He did not want to come home. Still, he had come home. He sat on the front porch.
>
> He liked the girls that were walking along the other side of the street. He liked the look of them much better than the French girls or the German girls. But the world they were in was not the world he was in. He would like to have one of them. But it was not worth it. They were such a nice pattern. He liked the pattern. It was exciting. But he would not go through all the talking. He did not want one badly enough. He liked to look at them all, though. It was not worth it.

So much for Krebs: now open Miss Stein and "meet" Melanctha.

Rose was lazy but not dirty and Sam was careful but not fussy, and then there was Melanctha. . . . When Rose's baby was coming to be born, Rose came to stay in the house where Melanctha Herbert lived just then, . . . Rose went there to stay, so that she might have the doctor from the hospital. . . . Melanctha Herbert had not made her life all simple like Rose Johnson. Melanctha had not found it easy with herself to make her wants and what she had, agree.

Melanctha Herbert was always losing what she had in wanting all the things she saw. Melanctha was always being left when she was not leaving others.

Melanctha Herbert always loved too hard and much too often. She was always full with mystery and subtle movements . . . etc. etc. etc.

There is no possibility, I am afraid, of slurring over this. It is just a thing that you have to accept as an unfortunate handicap, in an artist who is in some respects above praise. Sometimes it is less pronounced, there are occasions when it is *almost* absent—Krebs, for instance, is a full-blooded example of Hemingway steining away for all he is worth. But it is never quite absent.

How much does it matter? If we blot out Gertrude Stein, and suppose she does not exist, does this part of Hemingway's equipment help or not? We must answer *Yes* I think. It does seem to help a good deal: many of his best effects are obtained by means of it. It is so much a part of his craft, indeed, that it is difficult now to imagine Hemingway without this mannerism. He has never taken it over into a gibbering and baboonish stage as has Miss Stein. He has kept it as a valuable oddity, even if a flagrantly borrowed one—ever-present it is true, but one to which we can easily get used and come to like even as a delightfully clumsy engine of innocence. I don't mind it very much.

To say that, near to communism as we all are, it cannot matter, and is indeed praiseworthy, for a celebrated artist to take over, lock, stock, and barrel, from another artist the very thing for which he is mainly known, seems to me to be going too far in the denial of the person, or the individual—especially as in a case of this sort, the trick is after all, in the first instance, a *personal* trick. Such a practice must result, if universally indulged in, in hybrid forms or monstrosities.

And my main criticism, indeed, of the *steining* of Hemingway is that it does impose upon him an ethos —*the Stein ethos*, as it might be called. With Stein's bag of tricks he also takes over a *Weltanschauung*, which may not at all be his, and does in fact seem to contradict his major personal quality. This infantile, dull-witted, dreamy stutter compels whoever uses it to conform to the infantile, dull-witted type. He passes over into the category of *those to whom things are done*, from that of those who execute—if the latter is indeed where he originally belonged. One might even go so far as to say that this brilliant Jewish lady had made a *clown* of him by teaching Ernest Hemingway her baby-talk! So it is a pity. And it is very difficult to know where Hemingway proper begins and Stein leaves off. It is an uncomfortable situation for the critic, especially for one who "has a weakness" for the male member to this strange spiritual partnership, and very much prefers him to the female.

* * * * *

Hemingway's two principal books, *The Sun Also Rises* (for English publication called *Fiesta*) and *A Farewell to Arms*, are delivered in the first person singular. What that involves may not be at once apparent to those who have not given much attention to literary composition. But it is not at all difficult to explain. Suppose you, Raymond Robinson, sit down to write a romance; subject-matter, the War. You get your "I" started off, say just before the outbreak of war, and then there is the outbreak, and then "I flew to the nearest recruiting station and joined the army" you write. Then the "I" goes off to the Western Front (or the Italian Front) and you will find yourself writing "I seized the Boche by the throat with one hand and shot him in the stomach with the other", or whatever it is you imagine your "I" as doing. But this "I", the reader will learn, does not bear the name on the title page, namely Raymond Robinson. He is called Geoffrey Jones. The reader will think: "That is only a thin disguise. It is Robinson's personal experience all right!"

Now this difficulty (if it be a difficulty) is very much enhanced if (for some reason) Geoffrey Jones is *always* doing exactly the things that Raymond Robinson is known to have done. If Raymond Robinson fought gallantly at Caporetto, for instance, then Geoffrey Jones—with the choice of a whole earth at war to choose from—is at Caporetto too. If Raymond Robinson takes to the sport of bull-fighting, sure enough Geoffrey Jones—the "I" of the novel—is there in the bull-ring too, as the night follows day. This, in fine, has been the case with Hemingway and *his* First-person-singular.

Evidently, in this situation—possessing a First-person-singular that invariably copies you in this flattering way—something must be done about it. The *First-person-singular* has to be endowed so palpably with qualities that could by no stretch of the imagination belong to its author that no confusion is possible. Upon this principle the "I" of *The Sun Also Rises* is described as sexually impotent, which is a complete alibi, of course, for Hemingway.

But there is more than this. The sort of First-person-singular that Hemingway invariably invokes is a dull-witted, bovine, monosyllabic simpleton. This lethargic and stuttering dummy he conducts, or pushes from behind, through all the scenes that interest him. This burlesque First-person-singular behaves in them like a moronesque version of his brilliant author. He *Steins* up and down the world, with the big lustreless ruminatory orbs of a Picasso doll-woman (of the semi-classic type Picasso patented, with enormous hands and feet). It is, in short, the very dummy that is required for the literary mannerism of Miss Stein! It is the incarnation of the Stein-stutter—the male incarnation, it is understood.

But this constipated, baffled, "frustrated"—yes deeply and Freudianly "frustrated"—this wooden-headed, leaden-witted, heavy-footed, loutish and oafish marionette—peering dully out into the surrounding universe like a great big bloated five-year-old—pointing at this and pointing at that—uttering simply "CAT!"—"HAT!"—"FOOD!"—"SWEETIE!"—is, as a companion, infectious. His author has perhaps not been quite immune. Seen for ever through his nursery spectacles, the values of life accommodate themselves, even in the mind of his author, to the limitations and peculiar requirements of this highly idiosyncratic puppet.

So the political aspects of Hemingway's work (if, as I started by saying, one can employ such a word as *political* in connection with a thing that is so divorced from reality as a super-innocent, queerly-sensitive, village-idiot of a few words and fewer ideas) have to be sought, if anywhere, in the personality of this *First-person-singular*, imposed upon him largely by the Stein manner.

IV

We can return to the folk-prose problem now and face all the questions that the "done gones" and "sorta gonnas" present.

Mr. H. L. Mencken in his well-known, extremely competent, and exhaustive treatise, *The American Language* (a classic in this field of research, first published sixteen years ago) affirmed that the American dialect had not yet come to the stage where it could be said to have acquired charm for "the purists". If used (at that time) in narrative literature it still possessed only the status of a disagreeable and socially-inferior jargon, like the cockney occurring in a Dickens novel. The novelist, having invoked it to convey the manner of speech of his rustic or provincial puppets, steps smartly away and resumes the narrative in the language of Macaulay or Horace Walpole, more or less.

> In so far as it is apprehended at all [Mencken wrote in 1918], it is only in the sense that Irish-English was apprehended a generation ago—that is, as something uncouth and comic. But that is the way that new dialects

always come in—through a drum-fire of cackles. Given the poet, there may suddenly come a day when our *theirns* and *would 'a hads* will take on the barbaric stateliness of the peasant locution of old Maurya in *Riders to the Sea.*

The reason that the dialect of the Aran Islands, or that used by Robert Burns, was so different from cockney or from the English educated speech was because it was a mixture of English and another language, Gaelic or lowland Scots, and with the intermixture of foreign words went a literal translation of foreign idioms and the distortions arrived at by a tongue accustomed to another language. It was "broken-English", in other words, not "low-English", or slum-English, as is cockney.

Americans are today un-English in blood—whatever names they may bear: and in view of this it is surprising how intact the English language remains in the United States. But the *Beach-la-mar*, as he calls it, to which Mencken is referring above, is, as it were, the cockney of America. It has this great advantage over cockney, that it is fed with a great variety of immigrant words. It is, however, fundamentally *a class-jargon*; not a jargon resulting from difference of race, and consequently of speech. It is the *patois* of the "poor white", the Negro, or the uneducated immigrant. It is not the language spoken by Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth, for instance, or by Ernest Hemingway for that matter. But it is very *American.* And it is a *patois*, a fairly good rendering of which any American is competent to give. And you have read above the affectionate way Mencken refers to *our* "theirns" and "would 'a hads".

English as spoken in America is more vigorous and expressive than Oxford English, I think. It is easy to mistake a native from the wilds of Dorsetshire for an American, I have found: and were "educated" English used upon a good strong reverberant Dorsetshire basis, for instance, it would be all to the good, it is my opinion. Raleigh, Drake, and the rest of them, must have talked rather like that.

But with cockney it is not at all the same thing. There you get a degradation of English—it is *proletariat*, city-slum English, like Dublin-slum English. That is in a different category altogether to the weighty, rapid, and expressive torrent of the best Dorsetshire talk; and, as I have said, the *best* American is in the same category as the Dorsetshire—or as the non-slum Irish—a good, sound accent, too. But the question to be answered is whether the *Beach-la-mar* Mr. Mencken has in mind is not too much the deteriorated pidgin tongue of the United States; and whether, if that is *affectioné* too much by the *literati*—as being the most *American* thing available, like a jazz—it is not going to be a vulgar corruption, which will vulgarize, as well as enrich, the tongue. So far it exists generally in inverted commas. Is it to be let out or not? A question for Americans.

While England was a uniquely powerful empire-state, ruled by an aristocratic caste, its influence upon the speech as upon the psychology of the American ex-colonies was overwhelming. But today that ascendancy has almost entirely vanished. The aristocratic caste is nothing but a shadow of itself, the cinema has brought the American scene and the American dialect nightly into the heart of England, and the

"Americanizing" process is far advanced. "Done gones", "good guys", and "buddies" sprout upon the lips of cockney children as readily as upon those to the manner born, of New York or Chicago: and there is no politically-powerful literate class any longer now, in our British "Banker's Olympus", to confer prestige upon an exact and intelligent selective speech. Americanization—which is also for England, at least, proletarianization—is too far advanced to require underlining, even for people who fail usually to recognize anything until it has been in existence for a quarter of a century.

But if America has come to England, there has been no reciprocal movement of England into the United States: indeed, with the new American nationalism, England is deliberately kept out: and all the great influence that England exerted formerly—merely by being there and speaking the same tongue and sharing the same fundamental political principles—that is today a thing of the past. So the situation is this, as far as our common language is concerned: the destiny of England and the United States of America is more than ever one. But it is now the American influence that is paramount. The tables have effectively been turned in that respect.

V

But there is a larger issue even than that local to the English-speaking nations. English is of all languages the simplest grammatically and the easiest to make into a *Beach-la-mar* or *pidgin* tongue. Whether this fact, combined with its "extraordinary tendency to degenerate into slang of every kind", is against it, is of some importance for the future—for it will have less and less grammar, obviously, and more and more cosmopolitan slang. Mr. Mencken is of opinion that a language cannot be too simple—he is all for *Beach-la-mar*. The path towards analysis and the elimination of inflection, has been trod by English so thoroughly that, in its American form, it should today win the race for a universal Volapuk. Indeed, as Mr. Mencken says, "the foreigner essaying it, indeed, finds his chief difficulty, not in mastering its forms, but in grasping its lack of form". He doesn't have to learn a new and complex grammar; what he has to do is to forget grammar. Once he has done so, the rest is a mere matter of acquiring a vocabulary.

There is, it is true, the difficulty of the vowel sounds: but that is easily settled. Standard English possesses nineteen distinct vowel sounds: no other living European tongue except Portuguese, so Mr. Mencken says, possesses as many. Modern Greek, for instance, can only boast of five, we are told.

> The [American] immigrant, facing all these vowels, finds some of them quite impossible: the Russian Jew, for example, cannot manage *ur*. As a result, he tends to employ a neutralized vowel in the situations which present difficulties, and this neutralized vowel, supported by the slip-shod speech-habits of the native proletariat, makes steady progress.

That that "neutralized vowel" has made great progress in America no one would deny who has been there; and, starting in the natural language-difficulties of the Central European immigrant, the above-mentioned "neutralized vowel" will make its way over here in due course, who can doubt it? These vowels must be watched. *Watch your vowels* should be our next national slogan! The fatal grammatical easiness of English is responsible, however, for such problems as these, as much as the growing impressionability of the English nation, and the proletarianization, rather than the reverse, of the American.

If you place side by side the unfortunate impressionability of Hemingway, which caused him to adopt integrally the half-wit simplicity of repetitive Biblical diction patented by Miss Stein, and the other fact that Mr. Hemingway, being an American nationalist by temperament, is inclined to gravitate stylistically towards the national underdog dialect, in the last resort to the kind of *Beach-la-mar* I have been discussing, you have the two principal factors in Hemingway as artist in prose-fiction, to make of what you can.

Take up any book of his, again, and open it at random: you will find a page of stuff that is, considered in isolation, valueless as writing. It is not written: it is lifted out of Nature and very artfully and adroitly tumbled out upon the page: it is the *brut* material of every-day proletarian speech and feeling. The *matière* is cheap and coarse: but not because it is proletarian speech merely, but because it is *the prose of reality*—the prose of the street-car or the provincial newspaper or the five-and-ten-cent store.

It is not writing. I read a page as I come to it, just as I should watch scenes unfolding on the screen in the cinema without pictorial criticism; it contributes its fraction to the general effect. The cumulative effect is impressive, as *the events themselves* would be. It is like reading a newspaper, day by day, about some matter of absorbing interest—say the reports of a divorce, murder, or libel action. If you say *anyone could write it*, you are mistaken there, because, to obtain that smooth effect, of commonplace reality, there must be no sentimental or other heightening, the number of words expended must be proportionate to the importance and the length of the respective phases of the action, and any false move or overstatement would at once stand out and tell against it. If an inferior reporter to Hemingway took up the pen, that fact would at once be detected by a person sensitive to reality.

It is an art, then, from this standpoint, like the cinema, or like those "modernist" still-life pictures in which, in place of *painting* a match box upon the canvas, a piece of actual match box is stuck on. A recent example of this (I choose it because a good many people will have seen it) is the cover design of the French periodical *Minotaure*, in which Picasso has pasted and tacked various things together, sticking a line drawing of the Minotaur in the middle. Hemingway's is a poster-art, in this sense: or a *cinema in words. The steining* in the text of Hemingway is as it were the hand-made part—if we are considering it as "super-realist" design: a manipulation of the photograph if we are regarding it as a film.

If you say that this is not the way that Dante wrote, that these are not artistically permanent creations—or not permanent in the sense of a verse of Bishop King, or a page of *Gulliver*, I agree. But it is what we have got: there is actually *bad* and *good* of this kind; and I for my part enjoy what I regard as the good, without worrying any more about it than that.

That a particular phase in the life of humanity is implicit in this art is certain. It is one of the first fruits of the *proletarianization* which, as a result of the amazing revolutions in the technique of industry, we are all undergoing, whether we like it or not. But this purely political, or sociological side to the question can be brought out, I believe, with great vividness by a quotation. Here, for instance, is a fragment of a story of a mutiny at sea:

> I opened the door a little, about two inches, and saw there was a rope round the companion, which prevented the doors opening. Big Harry and Lips asked me what I wanted. I said I wanted to go down to the galley. Big Harry said: "Plenty of time between this and eight o'clock; you stop down below." I then went into the chief mate's room, which was the nearest to me. There was nobody there. I went to the second mate's room, he was not there. I went to the captain's pillow, it was standing up in his bed, and I found two revolvers loaded, one with six shots and one with four. I took possession of them and put them in my pockets. I then stood on the cabin table in the after cabin, and lifted the skylight up and tried to get out there. Renken was standing at the wheel, and he called out: "Come aft, boys, the steward is coming out of the skylight." I then closed the skylight and came down again. The after skylight was close to the wheel, about ten feet as near as I could guess. I could see him. The light used for the compass is in the skylight, and the wheel is in the back of it. The light is fastened to the skylight to light the compass, and the compass is just in front of the wheel. Before I could get the skylight closed I heard their steps coming aft, and I went down into the cabin and told the boy to light a fire. Shortly afterwards I heard five shots fired on deck. . . .

That is not by Hemingway, though it quite well might be. I should not be able to tell it was not by Hemingway if it were shown me as a fragment.

But is this by him?

Inside on a wooden bunk lay a young Indian woman. She had been trying to have her baby for two days. All the old women in the camp had been helping her. The men had moved off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she made. She screamed just as Nick and the two Indians followed his father and Uncle George into the shanty. She lay in the lower bunk, very big under a quilt. Her head was turned to one side. In the upper bunk was her husband. He had cut his foot very badly with an axe three days before. He was smoking a pipe. The room smelled very bad. Nick's father ordered some water to be put on the stove, while it was heating he spoke to Nick. "This lady is going to have a baby, Nick," he said. "I know," said Nick. "You don' know," said his father. "Listen to me. What she is going through is called being in labour. The baby wants to be born and she wants it to be born. All her muscles are trying to get the baby born. That is what is happening when she screams." "I see," Nick said. Just then the woman cried out.

The first of these two passages is from a book entitled *Forty Years in the Old Bailey*. It is the account of a mutiny and murder on the high seas, the trial occurring on May 3rd and 4th, 1876. It was evidence verbatim of one Constant von Hoydonck, a Belgian, twenty-five years of age, who joined the vessel *Lennie* at Antwerp, as chief steward, on October 22nd. This is a *Querschnitt*, a slice, of "real life": and how close Hemingway is to such material as this can be seen by comparing it with the second passage out of *In Our Time*.

That, I think, should put you in possession of all that is essential for an understanding of the work of this very notable artist; an understanding I mean; I do not mean that, as a work of art, a book of his should be approached in this critical and anatomizing spirit. That is another matter. Where the "politics" come in I suppose by this time you will have gathered. This is the voice of the "folk", of the masses, who are the cannon-fodder, the cattle outside the slaughter-house, serenely chewing the cud—*of those to whom things are done*, in contrast to those who have executive will and intelligence. It is itself innocent of politics—one might almost add alas! That does not affect its quality as art. The expression of the soul of the dumb ox would have a penetrating beauty of its own, if it were uttered with genius—with bovine genius (and in the case of Hemingway that is what has happened): just as much as would the folk-song of the baboon, or of the "Praying Mantis". But where the politics crop up is that if we take this to be the typical art of a civilization—and there is no serious writer who stands higher in Anglo-Saxony today than does Ernest Hemingway—then we are by the same token saying something very definite about that civilization.

An Agrarian Programme for the South

W. T. Couch

In a recent issue of this journal Mr. Allen Tate reviewed under the caption "A Whole View of the South" a volume which I edited and issued under the title *Culture in the South*. In the course of his article Mr. Tate notes the fact that none of the essays in the book offers a programme for correcting the evils of the present Southern tenant system.

"Why is this?" he asks. "Simply because it is a dangerous political question: it would involve a programme to make agriculture independent and prosperous at the expense of industry's monopoly of the commodity and labour market."

As editor of the volume under criticism, I did not think it appropriate to include a chapter setting forth a programme in a book which attempted to describe a culture. It happens that Mr. Tate questions also the use of the term "culture" in the title *Culture in the South*, but whichever of the accepted definitions of this term one uses, surely it cannot be considered as embracing more than something that is, not something that may be or ought to be.

I felt it necessary, therefore, to reserve the discussion of programmes to some other occasion. It is my intention to use this occasion for this purpose. Whatever the shortcomings of the plan I shall outline here, I do not believe it will be subject to the criticism that it avoids any "dangerous political question".

In order for any agrarian plan for the South to be intelligible it is necessary first to have a clear understanding of the complexity of Southern economy. I shall attempt first to describe this complexity and then I shall proceed to the outline of a plan which I believe would restore health to Southern agriculture.

II

Cotton is the most important commodity in the agricultural and industrial life of the South. When the cotton gin was invented in 1793, cotton was almost negligible in Southern economy. The pattern of quantity production in large-scale farming had already been developed in the growth of tobacco, indigo, and rice. The chief difference between this pattern and that of quantity production of manufactured articles in factories was that Southern staple farming, like all farming, depended on the land and the seasons, that is, in the main on processes which could not be greatly hastened, whereas the industrial pattern could be and constantly was revolutionized through the invention of new machinery, the standardizing of products, and the speeding-up of processes. In addition, quantity production in agriculture could be accomplished successfully with unskilled and comparatively unintelligent labour because its processes were crude and rough. Otherwise industry and large-scale agriculture were governed by precisely the same economic considerations.

The method of the industrialist was to use new machinery and to standardize and speed up his processes. The cotton planter adopted the already existing staple-crop production patterns, but he could find no new machinery, he could go no further in the direction of standardization than the selection of good varieties of seed, he could not increase the speed of the seasons, and he was sharply limited by the fertility of the soils within his range. But labour was cheap and land was cheaper. The only method of greatly increasing his income, therefore, was to increase his exploitation of land and labour. This is what he did.

Since the early 1800's the prosperity of the South has depended on the price of cotton in Liverpool. But while cotton held this important position, its production was controlled by less than one-fourth of the Southern white population. It was this cotton interest that exhausted the soils of the southeastern states and moved on to exhaust the soils in the lower South. It was this interest that made possible the breeding of slaves in Maryland and Virginia for profitable sale to the planters of the newer regions. It was this interest which fastened slavery on the South, which created the powerful Southern demand for more land and labour to exploit, and which inevitably brought on the Civil War. The emancipation of the slaves, the decisive defeat of the expanding cotton kingdom, and the introduction of commercial fertilizers have given new form to the cotton-growing interests of the South, but in all essentials they remain today the same, and like industry are absolutely subordinated to the need for money-making.

Throughout ante-bellum times the great majority of the white population did not own any slaves. A small number lived in tidewater towns and cities, but the great majority lived in the open country on isolated farmsteads. In general, the most fertile land was owned by planters and cultivated by slave labour. If the yeoman farmer lived on fertile land, if he was able to reach a market with his products, and if he was lucky, he would acquire capital and become a planter. His chief aim in life was to get more land and to own slaves. Of course this was impossible for most of them. They continued living on their small, isolated, and comparatively unfertile farms. The economic interests of this class were not directly dependent on the price of cotton. The yeomen farmers raised small staple crops only to get cash to buy things they could not produce on their own farms. They were able in this way to secure very little more than the necessities of life, and their existence was consequently rough and crude. The pictures of the better-class yeomen farmers given in *I'll Take My Stand* by twelve Southerners and in *Lamb in His Bosom* by Caroline Miller are essentially correct. But while the yeoman farmer was not directly dependent on the price of cotton in Liverpool and while his existence was sturdy and independent compared with that of the farmer of today, still the manner in which he rallied to the support of the planter ideology in the Civil War indicates clearly and finally that his life was not his own. When the time of crisis came, he was unmistakably a part of the cotton system, just as the Northern farmer had to fight the battles of industrialism.

The other elements in the Southern population, the poor-whites and the Negroes, were even less active in the making of Southern policies. As excellent fighters and cannon fodder in the Civil War, the poor-whites were to disprove the slanders which had grown into mythical proportions concerning them. The policies toward the Negro population were determined solely by the need for a healthy, controllable, and cheap labour supply. It is not out of place to remark here that the solution which the slaveholders of the old South gave to this problem of healthy, controllable, and cheap labour was far better than that given by the Northern industrialists, and is incomparably better than the solution which is given by the present labour system in the South.

III

Southern economy has changed in many external aspects since the Civil War, but except for the change in the status of the Negro from chattel to wage slavery, in no way is the system prevailing today essentially different from that of 1850. The cotton planter has moved from country to town, the proportion of white farmers engaged in the growth of cotton has increased greatly, and at the same time tenantry has constantly grown throughout the cotton belt until it now averages more than sixty per cent for both whites and blacks. The yeomen farmers who still own their homes have been brought under the influence of the staple-crop system through increased occupation with staple crops, through the greater degree of integration of modern life, through the development of school systems and other public services, and through the building of good roads, which in their turn have increased taxes and forced the farmer to enter the competition for monetary gain. There are still isolated regions in the South, but life on the solitary farms has never been quite so good as its advocates have imagined, and the isolated regions in the South today offer no model that anyone who knows them would care to follow. Southern prosperity, more than ever before, is today dependent on world markets. In 1850 if the price of cotton chanced to fall as low as five or six cents a pound, the welfare of a quarter of the Southern population was immediately threatened. But today the base of the cotton system is so expanded and Southern economy so integrated that if the price of cotton falls to these levels, the welfare of everyone in the South is immediately affected.

It is evident that any agrarian plan for the South must either find a way of controlling the price of cotton in relation to other commodities or must find a way to make Southern agriculture independent of the gyrations of the cotton market.

The price of cotton in world markets cannot be controlled by any action taken in the United States. The limitation of crops in this country may result only in their further development in other parts of the world. Brazil, Argentina, India, China, Russia, and Africa offer possibilities for increased cotton-growing that are being given serious attention and that may result in the loss of markets, whether price control is attempted in this country or not. This development will only be hastened by a rising price in the world market. There is, therefore, no hope for a solution in this direction. However, it would be possible to maintain price control within the United States. But control here will only fasten on the South more firmly than ever a system dominated by commercialism which is grinding the life out of the population, white and black. Price control alone is not enough.

IV

Any agrarian programme for the South which does not consider at the outset the conflicting interests at present within Southern economy is a fraud and unworthy of any serious attention. The various interests now engaged in cotton-growing may be classified under three general types. First, the purely commercial interest, such as the enormous plantations on which cotton is grown as a business enterprise; second, the farm-owning families that grow cotton as a cash crop, using the money that is derived from it for the purchase of supplies that cannot be produced on the farm; and third, the tenants and labourers doing the day labour on the farms owned by the interests of the first class, and a large number of tenants scattered throughout the South on smaller plantations and farms. The historic procedure of the South has been to lump all these interests together and consider them one. The historic consequence has been that the commercial interest has dominated, the small farmer has become smaller and smaller, and the extent and evils of tenantry and migratory labour have increased until the South today has probably the most neglected and hopeless peasantry in the Western world.

The interests of these three groups as now organized under our money economy cannot be reconciled. While our orators and statesmen have bemoaned the decline of farm ownership and the increase of tenantry, they have regularly served the interest of commercialized agriculture, and the other interests have suffered accordingly. Suppose, for instance, that Southern politicians seriously wished to establish the farm-owning and farm-operating family on a firm basis. Now if there were any real desire to make the family-size farm a sound economic unit and to maintain it as a healthy type of life, what could be done to accomplish this purpose? The answer I shall give to this question is an obvious and inevitable one. Inevitable, I say, if there is any strong desire to give a real answer.

V

The necessity for farm relief has been recognized by everyone now for many years. The present Federal Administration has made drastic efforts in this direction, but the kind of relief which it has given in the South has brought assistance mainly to the landlords and to the commercialized agricultural interests rather than to the farm-owning family or the tenants and labourers. The interest of the farm-owning family has perhaps been helped to some extent, but the interest of the tenant and the labourer has been severely injured. Benefits have been given on the basis of acreage and production in the past five years. The chief benefits, therefore, have necessarily accrued to the larger interests. If, however, the purposes of those who framed the relief acts had been to establish the family-size farm on a sound basis, they would have provided for allotments—permission to grow ten to twenty bales of cotton—*to families only;* they would have limited these allotments to 750,000 to 1,000,000 families in the best cotton-growing areas; and they would have placed a prohibitive tax on any other cotton-growing interest. They could have required the families given allotments to grow sufficient food and feed-stuff to maintain themselves so that the income secured from cotton would be free to purchase things which they could not produce.

At the same time it would have been necessary to take care of the tenants, farming families, and casual labourers formerly occupied with cotton but not given cotton-growing allotments. There would have been 500,000 to 750,000 of these. A small proportion of this number could remain on isolated self-sustaining farms growing special crops for special markets. The great majority, however, would have to grow food and feed crops and rely temporarily on Federal assistance until they could be shifted into the growth of specialized crops in specially suited regions or until they could be re-established in farm villages.

Throughout most of the South isolated farm life has been extremely unhealthy. Large portions of this population have fallen victims to hookworm, malaria, pellagra, and worst of all, to an almost hopelessly dark ignorance and mental stagnation. Regardless of what is done about the reorganization of the cotton system, the establishment of attractive farm villages ought to be boldly entered upon by the Federal Government. Thousands of tenants are now being displaced by the prevailing mode of agricultural "relief"; thousands of others would not be seriously missed by their landlords and would themselves welcome an opportunity for a healthy and well-balanced life.

There is much talk now of experimentation in the establishment of such villages. So far as the need is concerned, there is no question. Instead of the few timid experimental efforts that are being made here and there throughout the South, there ought to be a definite plan for the establishment of four or five thousand villages of one hundred to three hundred farm families within the next five years.

The typical farm village should include one hundred to three hundred houses of the best modern design specially adapted for the hot southern summers and the sometimes very cold winters, with all the conveniences of plumbing and electricity and the luxuries of built-in bookcases and radios. The schoolhouse should be built to serve as a training centre in the handicrafts as well as in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and above all it should be designed for flexibility in use. There should be a community centre with a library, reading rooms, a movie hall, rooms for dances and games, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, and tennis and basket-ball courts and other playgrounds. The post office and places of business should all be designed for beauty as well as for utility. Each village would have to have buildings providing space for very much the same functions as are now carried on in the ordinary village, but new life could be lent to these functions by giving them more attractive surroundings and by establishing the village on such a basis that the dominance of a competitive money economy would be impossible. It would be necessary to give the title for all the business property in the village to the village itself. Office and store space would then be allotted on a rental basis subject to the applicant's ability to pass an examination based on high standards of service. In case of competition for space, the allotment would go to the one who passed the best examination and not to the one who offered to pay the highest rent. Rents would be standardized, and devoted to maintenance and improvement. For those who did not win in competition for business space, there could always be provided a home and land for farming either in the same village or in a new village. All of the professions would be licensed as the best now are, and payment would be in the form of a salary, provision of a home, rent free, and a claim on a portion of the products of the village.

Private enterprise would be permitted to go as far as it pleased in making the best crops possible and in improving land, in developing new and improved varieties of farm products, or in perfecting professional service, but no opportunity would be given for the financial interest of any one individual or group of individuals to dominate the life of the village. Investments, for instance, might be limited to government bonds and these could be kept at reasonable levels by income and inheritance taxes.

Each farmer in the village would occupy himself mainly with specialization on a few crops that would give him a full schedule of work throughout most of the year. That is, each farmer would not raise two or three main crops, vegetables, fruit, livestock, poultry, and a wide variety of other products as the best types of self-sustaining farms now do. There would be, for instance, only a few farmers who would raise chickens and these would specialize mainly on them. Each farmer could then be an expert in the growth of a few crops and could take advantage of the best methods of scientific farming.

It is in this sphere of village life, its internal organization and the activities of those who live in it, that experimentation might have free play. It would be impossible in advance to indicate exactly what internal organization would work best because no efforts have ever been made in this country to discover what could be done in this field. In its general outline there is no doubt the scheme would be successful and that a type of farm village life in the South could be developed far superior to the farm life now prevalent.

VI

If the plan outlined above were followed, two distinct types of farm life in the South would result. First, the family-size farm would be made a sound economic unit and one which would offer a place for those families wishing to live in partial isolation. The method of allotment applied to cotton could be applied to other crops grown for sale. It is only in some way such as this that the family-size farm can be made a safe and permanent economic unit.

It is possible that some families with cotton or other crop allotments might prefer to secure the gains of large-scale enterprise by pooling their interests and establishing large farms. This would raise difficult problems of ownership, control, and distribution, but it is certain that if it were really desired, a better solution could be achieved than that which now obtains in corporate enterprise. Equal and inalienable common ownership, limited private investment, and maximum and minimum salaries and wages would be the keys to the solution.

Second, for those who dislike isolation there would be the possibility of living in the newly created farm villages and these would become a permanent feature of Southern life. In both of these types of farm life the opportunity of a healthy and well-balanced existence would be created for the first time in the South. In return for security, however, the farmer would have to accept limitations on his investments that would prevent him from acquiring more land than he could use; he would have to give up his present rights to speculate.

I have said nothing about the Negro. I believe he should have his own villages and his own farms, and, as with the whites, they should either be given to him by the government, or an arrangement should be made under which he could buy and pay for them in ten or fifteen years. When one thinks of the millions of acres of idle and cheap land wasting away in the South, one realizes that once the aim is clearly conceived and the political determination aroused, this proposal is not so fantastic as it might seem. It should be remembered, too, that the only other way for the farmer to get the land is by revolution. If he does not get it by a peaceful and orderly process, it is not likely that he will wait many years to take it by violence.

The only obstacle in the way of such a programme is a political one. The men, the machinery, the raw materials, the land, and all the necessary techniques are here. It would take no more than a few acts of Congress and honest administration to establish the family-size farm on a firm basis. It would take no more than other acts and the same honest administration, with the co-operation of architects, landscape gardeners, scientific farmers, and social planners, to erect and establish the farm villages. Where would the money come from? That question can be answered easily. The wealth of this country is internally owned. Every debt that is owed by anyone is also owned by someone. The payment of the cost of building the villages would be a simple bookkeeping transaction: a mere matter of taxing those who owned the debt incurred for building and paying them with the money collected from them. The essential problem is, as Mr. Tate has said, the political one. It may be resolved to one question: are our advocates of farm life really interested in making farming a wholesome and attractive occupation? Surely, if all those who have urged the great need of a healthy farm life will actually support a programme that can achieve this end, then there is no doubt it will be achieved.

The Masterless Man

G. K. CHESTERTON

SOME time ago I read a newspaper article, which contained a rather arresting phrase, which is just exactly not one of the nine to thirteen phrases which, arranged in various ways, make up the whole of most newspaper articles. It had about it a smack of history, even if it was not altogether good history; a hint of the possibility of philosophy, even if it was here used in the interest of a false philosophy. Nor, indeed, was it without other merits. The writer was contributing an article to an Organ of Democracy, one of those great Radical sheets that are the flags of the people clamouring for freedom; but, to do him justice, he did not devote the whole article to hopes of the return of capitalism with all its monopolies and money power vested in the few; it was not from end to end a song of praise for the epoch of the employers and the unemployed, like a real democratic article in the Liberal press. The writer had some consciousness of the horror of the crisis that has come; and of which even its apologists admit that it may come again. He had the sense and courage to say something about the possibility of the peril becoming much more than a passing warning. But before he made any of these comparatively sane admissions, he went through a curious ritual, which I notice is now practised regularly *de rigueur*.

Before a free and unfettered Radical journalist is allowed to say that the present position is bad, he is morally forced to go through a form of saying (almost in the same words in every case) that, of course, the past was very much worse. Keep an eye on this opening, for its recurrence and regularity is very amusing. By this the journalist formally purges himself of heresy; one might well say, of history. He is allowed to hint that things are worse than they ought to be; so long as he makes first a solemn legal affirmation that they are better than they were. It is a sort of Oath of Abjuration to preserve the Protestant, or Progressive, succession. The better sort of Liberal writers accompany it with sad admissions of our modern futility; but, when all allowance is made for these, I cannot work myself into a heat of admiration for this new form of Christian humility. Somehow I do not care very much for the Christian who says in his general confession: "I confess most humbly that I am a miserable sinner; but you must admit that I am not such a disgusting old rip as my grandfather; I really am a good, sound, virtuous fellow, compared with my Uncle Marmaduke; and you will not deny that I am at least a much finer fellow than my father; and that I have done something to balance, by sheer conscientiousness and unselfish public spirit, the more revolting characteristics of my mother."

I repeat that this formula for repentance does not in itself attract me; but it is a formula universally demanded of all Progressives, before they are allowed to admit that modern things are sometimes a little tragic; that a good many men died in the latest and most modern war, or that a good many men were sacked in the latest and most modern Slump. The writer here in question, however, doubtless to relieve the monotony of repeating this ritual preface, strikes out one phrase which is not often used by journalists; and does really involve a number of interesting ideas, both on one side and the other. He said that crises like that of Unemployment often occurred in history; and that it was an even more tragic fate to be a Masterless Man in the Middle Ages.

Even the abuses of the Middle Ages are bright and breezy enough to bring something like a breath of fresh air into the filthy fog of the respectabilities and social virtues of the present day. And the phrase does suggest some very interesting speculations. To begin with, it is quite true that in the very early Middle Ages (that is in the converted Roman Empire partly recovering from the barbarian invasion) the Feudal System was so fixed that a man might have been unhappy through being a Masterless Man. Very few men were masterless, except the Pope and the Emperor; and even there there were complications. I am well aware, needless to say, that no man is really a masterless man. But those who complain of my articles being theological, will at least excuse me for not dwelling on the point here. It is enough to say that even the worst of the Popes had a curious tendency to believe; and that some of the worst of the Emperors had very adequate reasons to believe and tremble.

But the real point of interest is this; that since the Peasant progress, later in the Middle Ages, has expanded into the vast peasant communities spreading over all Europe today, a number of questions have been answered. The most important answer concerns the last question; since peasants are everywhere the prop of religious tradition, it is proved that a man may be more inclined to accept his real Master, because he has not any earthly master. But what such writers evidently do not know, is that the Masterless Man is even possible; let alone that he is universal. Now that is what is really meant by narrowness. Why are we annoyed by the crank; the really dull crank? I submit the reply that he is a man who is always solving what is solved already. He is like the cracked inventor who invents an existing invention. A civilized man's irritation with Prohibition, say, can be expressed in many ways; as that he merely dislikes what is uncivilized. But the true reason is this; he is irritated by imagining all the millions voting (at one time) for Prohibition, without knowing that in the centres of civilization the problem has been solved without Prohibition. In the lands where most men drink wine, very few men drink too much wine. In the same way, we are irritated by the Bolshevist, who would abolish all property like wine, because we feel he does not know that property can be well divided; and, in the old civilization, often is well divided. The Socialist cannot imagine anything but the Trusts; just as the teetotaller cannot imagine anything but the Trade. They do not know that in an older culture, both problems have long been solved. The writer in the Liberal paper was simply ignorant of the fact that the small farmer is a very large factor. He did not know that, if there is one figure now bestriding all Europe like a giant, it is the Masterless Man. He did know, but he did not think (for such men know many things they never think of) that modern England is in so utterly unhuman and unnatural a state, that (except for a millionaire or two) there is practically no Englishman who can boast of being a Masterless Man.

The Rise and Fall of Industrialism

Herbert Shove

It is a common error to confuse industrialism with modern scientific technique. To wish to end the industrial system is supposed to involve a desire to relinquish all those added powers over natural forces which man has acquired within the past couple of centuries. Logically, we are told—quite rightly—that if one proposes to do this one cannot stop short of a return to primitive savagery. There are many today who are alive to the necessity of a return to the land but who withhold support of the pioneers of the Land Movement because they think we are irrational fanatics in deprecating the use of, for example, the tractor plough. Or again, because we make it a crucial point that the new settlers shall produce as much as possible for their own immediate consumption rather than for market. These misapprehensions arise from the failure to recognize that the present industrial system is not merely an imperfect system to be reformed, or even an evil system to be ended, but an impermanent system that must, by its very nature, pass away within a comparatively short time.

The Industrial System is not essentially a matter of technique. It is that system wherein society is dominated by the idea of exchange for gain. Its overlords are middlemen whose test of everything is, "Will it pay?"; that is, "Will it give us more power to effect further exchanges?" This is not necessarily the object of exchange. "The exchange of things is two-fold", says St. Thomas Aquinas,

> one natural, as it were, and necessary, whereby the commodity is exchanged for another, or money is taken for a commodity in order to satisfy the needs of life. Suchlike trading, properly so called, does not belong to the middleman, but rather to housekeepers or civil servants who have to provide the household or the state with the necessaries of life. The other kind of exchange is either that of money for money or of any commodity for money, not on account of the necessities of life, but for profit, and this kind of exchange, properly speaking, regards the middleman. The first kind of exchange is commendable because it supplies a natural need. The second is justly deserving of blame because, considered in itself, it satisfies the greed for gain, which knows no limit and tends to infinity. Hence trading, considered in itself, has a certain debasement attaching thereto, in so far as, by its nature, it does not imply a virtuous or necessary end.

It is to be observed—indeed St. Thomas goes on to say so—that the above passage does not mean that it is sinful to be a middleman or to trade for profit. But it does mean that this manner of life is not, in itself, deserving of high consideration. It must be controlled, first by the conscience of the merchant himself, recognizing that he is engaged in a highly dangerous occupation which may very easily become anti-social, and therefore sinful, and secondly by the watchfulness of statesmen not themselves exposed to its temptations and able therefore to take a disinterested view.

Now the statesman is nothing if he have not the power to enforce his decisions. Justice without her sword becomes a laughing-stock to the criminal.

With the decline of the moral restraint of the Faith on the mercantile mind there has been associated, particularly in the countries wherein the authority of the Church has been most completely denied, a tendency to deny also the authority of the "Prince" (in the mediaeval sense). English mediaeval history is largely a record of more or less successful attempts by Kings to curb the power of overweening nobles. After the rise of the squirearchy, to whom the balance of power passed through the overthrow of the Church, the struggle became one between this class and the Crown. In this the squires were entirely successful.

The feudal theory of landholding was of a graduated personal responsibility of administration culminating in the King, who, as "Lord Paramount", was the trustee–under God–of the National Heritage. However far the practice fell short of this ideal it was always recognized and often insisted upon. It put landlordism on a different, and a higher, plane than commercialism. The rise of the squires destroyed it, and its last vestiges–save in the verbiage of legal documents–were swept away by the Statute of Tenures–passed under the Commonwealth and re-enacted after the Restoration–whereby land was practically assimilated to goods and made the subject of absolute private ownership.

After this there was really nothing to give the landlord a right to regard himself as the superior of the trader. Nevertheless, the social prestige attaching to landholding has survived almost to this day, though ever diminishing. So, too, it would be grossly unfair to represent the squires as universally oblivious of their duties as trustees of their estates for the common good. Here again, most of us could name even living representatives of the true feudal tradition. Though it is to be feared that in a great many instances family pride is the ruling motive in the desire to "keep up" the estate; or, at best, the idea of a kind of "charity" towards "inferiors" who are not able to look after their own affairs. This doctrine of poverty as arising necessarily from natural inferiority is a legacy of the system of "Political Economy", originated to salve the consciences of the wealthy during the elaboration of the system of mercantile dominance.

We have seen already how landed wealth was assimilated to mercantile. But throughout its history the squirearchy was constantly recruited from the ranks of the mercantile classes, whose riches were gained in the first place chiefly by exploiting the prowess of English seamen. At the outset, in Elizabethan times, these adventurers were hardly to be distinguished from pirates. One of the most famous of them originated the highly lucrative slave trade. Next came the trade to the Indies, the pioneers of which, the Portuguese, soon found that they had but blazed a trail for rivals from France, Holland, and England. The Levant, and even Muscovy, also claimed attention. All these, however, were essentially trades in luxuries. Hardly anything was imported that could be produced at home; while all that was essential to national life and culture was so produced. But in so far as the trade was anything more than piracy something had to be exported in return.

For some centuries this export question had been an important one. England is a country well adapted to produce large quantities of high-grade wool. The temptation to landlords to divert their land from tillage to sheep-ranching wherever they were in a position to do so had proved too much for many of them as early as the fourteenth century. But, so long as the mediaeval idea of responsibility held, attempts, more or less successful, had been made to check this in the interests of the rural population and of national self-sufficiency.

Under the guild system of industry the introduction of devices which would tend to produce unemployment, or to deprive a trained workman of the advantage of his skill, was also discouraged. Mediaeval authorities, whether political or industrial, were alive to the injustice of such destruction of the wealth of the poorer classes in this immaterial form of personal skill, and interfered to restrain the use of such machines as the gig mill and the fulling mill.

Mr. R. H. Tawney in his admirable book, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, has dealt at length with the effect of the hard Calvinistic theology of the Puritans on commercial morality. The permeation of England by this spirit was helped, throughout the seventeenth century, by a number of contributory causes. We have already touched upon the development of overseas trade out of the buccaneering of the sixteenth century. Along with this there was also going on an infiltration of Calvinistic ideas from Scotland and Holland, and later, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, from the French Huguenot body. These influences tended to reinforce the indigenous growth of the spirit of mercantilism and overseas exploitation.

Once that spirit gains control of the sword of justice in a community, the doom of its peasantry and "landed aristocracy" is sealed. So also, as we hope to show in the remaining pages of this short outline, is the permanent greatness of the nation. This is due to the interaction of two natural economic causes, forgetfulness of which has led to many modern errors and false systems. Firstly, the difference in what we may call the "rigidity of the time factor" in agriculture and in industrial production. Secondly, the difference in the importance to human subsistence of organic and inorganic substances; of things that grow and of things that are "made" from materials that do not grow. Closely connected with which is the distinction between things consumed in their use ("fungibles") and things not so consumed ("non-fungibles"). We will first consider the operation of the time factor in enabling unrestricted commercialism to destroy national agriculture.

We have already pointed out the difficulty that confronts the overseas adventurer when, ceasing to be a mere pirate, he becomes a trader. Imports can only be paid for in exports.

It is, of course, by no means unusual at the outset for valuable imports to be obtained in return for practically valueless exports. But this stage does not last long. In India and the countries wherein the commercial greatness of England was chiefly built up, the people were not, even at the outset, unsophisticated savages. Large as were the profits of such trade, substantial payment was always necessary. The tributary system on which, for instance, the Spanish Empire was founded, depends on an initial military subjugation of the exploited territory which was only later, and very partially, the English method. Nor, of course, could payment be made in specie, for the precious metals are not English products, but rather those of the other parties of the trade. And the traditional wool or corn of earlier English export were in no demand.

Manufactured goods had therefore to be obtained for export. There are two methods of doing this. The first, which had been that of the old Hanse towns, of Venice and of the rival Italian cities which she eventually overthrew, is that of the "emporium", which lives on the margin between the purchase and sales prices of goods in two independent areas between which its shipping affords a link, but neither of which is under its own governmental control. This, from the nature of the case, became the chief Dutch method and has been largely developed in London. But the insular position of the latter puts it at a disadvantage compared with the Dutch ports. The English merchants therefore sought to obtain their goods for export in their own country.

It was this fact that led to the Industrial Revolution and made England the centre of it. The already financially–and therefore, under the changed conditions of warfare, now militarily–powerful class of merchants, the "Lords of Exchange", set themselves to foster and control production without reference to local, or even to national need, but solely for "exchange value". They became capitalist "manufacturers".

That human raw material was available for the Industrial Revolution was very largely due to the thorough permeation of the landlord class with mercantile ideas and the struggle of the squires to compete with the growing wealth of the traders. That they ever entered into such competition was due to their ignorance of the essential difference in the time factors governing agriculture and trade. For capital embarked in agriculture can only be turned over at a rate fixed by the succession of the seasons. In trade this limitation does not exist. A profit can be made on each completed transaction, and the more highly organized is trade—as by credit devices, rapid transport, et cetera—the more frequently can deals be effected. Thus it may be said that whereas an agriculturist can only get rich "at simple interest", a commercialist—once a certain point is reached in the development of trade organization—can do so at "compound interest". It is therefore useless for the former to pit himself against the latter in the race for wealth.

Nevertheless, the money-minded squires made this attempt. They embarked on schemes of "agricultural improvement", designed to enable them to draw more rent from their lands. This was the real object of all such devices as the enclosures, which ousted the old small yeomen in favour of the later big tenant farmers. Some of the new methods of cultivation were real improvements from the point of view of increased production of essential foodstuffs, and even, more rarely, of increased employment. But that was not the end in view. We have not here space to go into detail. But it is notorious that the final result of the agricultural policy of the landlords of the eighteenth century was to drive crowds of country people who had hitherto enjoyed a frugal independence, into the ranks of the day labourers, who, so far as they remained in the country, earned a pittance often below a bare subsistence level; while so far as—in the words of one callous landlord—they "hoolied away", it was to form the miserable proletariat of the industrial centres.

The piling up of these festering wens was welcomed by the more foolish—"progressive"—squires. Not only did they provide an outlet for displaced rural labour, but in them the population multiplied rapidly through the operation of another factor directly contrary to the accepted theories of the time. The recently formulated "Doubleday's Law", that human fertility varies inversely as the standard of physical comfort, had full play in the early slums. So that the demand for food forced up the prices of agricultural produce and enabled the landlords to raise rents yet further.

The formation of the industrial antheaps was due to the realization by the industrio-merchants of the value to themselves of "time saving", *i.e.*, of speed of turnover. Even under a system of hand-work, or the use of small appliances by home workers—as in the "undertaker" system of the English textile industry—time is lost in the initial distribution of material and subsequent collection of manufactured goods. Only so long as the raw material is locally produced can such industries resist the concentrating effect of mercantilized production for a distant market.

In England the spearhead of the Industrialist assault on the old order was unfortunately one particular textile—cotton. Not only did this command a ready sale in the countries wherewith the most lucrative trade could be driven, but its raw material was procurable under peculiarly advantageous circumstances; being grown by slave labour under British masters and in a country whose climate allowed of forcing down the standard of subsistence of the workers to a very low level. When, at the English end, was added the possession of such a port as Liverpool, in a district with a climate almost ideal for the processes of manufacture, the development of a concentrated factory industry in this commodity was, under the economic conditions of the time, practically inevitable. It was from Lancashire that the industrial canker spread to poison English life.

The origin of the frantic speeding up of modern industry is also to be found in the peculiar conditions of textile manufacture. Where rapidity of production is the end in view there is an inevitable race between the two branches of spinning and weaving. Under the old conditions of pure hand-work weaving is a far quicker process than spinning, though a more skilled and arduous one. Hence spinning was traditionally a sort of general "spare-time" job for women, whereas weaving was a whole-time job for male specialists. The introduction of the first great speeding-up device, Kay's flying shuttle, accentuated this difference and stimulated the series of spinning inventions which, throughout the eighteenth century, led to a reversal of the old order, so that the problem became one of weaving fast enough to keep the spindles continuously running. The result, as we all know, is the modern automatic power loom and the troubles about the number thereof a single operative shall be compelled to attend.

Though the factory system, especially in Lancashire, was actually initiated before its introduction, the use of "power" in industry consolidated and helped it to become universal. The developed industrial city was essentially nothing more than a small group of steam engines round which those whose livelihood depended on attending the machines they drove were forced to crowd. The common way of looking at the application of power-driven machinery to industry is that it multiplies the productive power of the individual workman. Leaving aside any question of its moral effect on him, this is a very partial view. In the first place, it does not multiply the raw material and cannot therefore produce more of the finished product than could an adequate number of hand-workers in the same time, or a lesser number in a longer time. Secondly, its effect on quality is, generally speaking, deleterious. Its real economic effect is to increase the rate of turnover and thus *cheapen production by saving the subsistence of additional or—if demand does not increase proportionately with increased rate of output—of displaced workers.*

When the common worker has been reduced to something approximating a bare subsistence level, the importance of this to the machino-facturer is primary. To reduce the "wages bill" relatively to the selling price of his goods is the high road to fortune. The minimum of food, fuel, clothing, and shelter required to sustain life in a given climate being, however, inelastic, and the rate of supply of food from a given countryside being limited by the seasonal time factor and only capable of increase by improved methods of culture in a—constantly diminishing—arithmetical progression, the prices of food relative to goods, put on the market at a rate increased geometrically by reducing the time cycle of manufacture, must constantly rise. Thus the natural tendency is for the wages bill to rise and this further encourages mechanization. Unless the market can be kept constantly expanding—which, of course, becomes progressively more difficult—this must mean unemployment and consequent misery only alleviable if new industries can be established capable of absorbing the displaced workers.

This, the stock remedy of the classical economists, presupposes an adaptability in the worker only possible if practised skill is discounted and labour is reduced to a dead level of unspecialized machine-minding. The natural consequence of this must be a tendency to equalization of wages at the lowest possible level. In the later stages, such as we see today, technical skill comes to mean simply skill in designing and maintaining the machines—rendered ever more and more "fool-proof"—and even this is discounted by reducing the demand for it as the processes of machine-building become themselves more and more mechanical. The "plums" of modern industrialism are to be sought in the "sales" and advertising, rather than in the technical producing departments. To find a "Captain of Industry" who could take charge of the work in one of his own factories is very much the exception.

All this operates against the agriculturist; even against the agricultural landlord. Its effects are, for reasons already touched upon, masked at the outset by the apparent stimulus of increased demand for agricultural produce to feed the industrial towns. This enables the landlords to gain a higher rent and—to some extent—the agricultural tenants to get a better return. The latter is, however, very soon swallowed up by the former in a community which has been developed on the English lines of big estates let out at competitive rents; the system which is the fruit of the commercializing of landholding.

This rack-renting is also helped by the growth of the idea of "investment". The system of working on borrowed capital, originating in the mercantile devices for increasing rapidity of turnover, is elaborated during the growth of industrialism. To it we owe our modern organization of "companies", originally simply one of extended "sleeping partnership", but now, since the introduction of "limited liability", really only the lending of money at interest—whether fixed or speculative—and often pure gambling. And from it arises the idea that "money makes money"; that the old distinction between investment in a fruitful thing, such as land or the assistance of a skilled workman, which gives a title to a share in the produce, and a mere unproductive loan, where there is no produce to share, is no longer of force. The economists, writing in the days of rapid industrial expansion and increasing opportunities for productive investment, evolved the idea of an average "profit of stock", a standard rate of interest inherent in investment as such. The money-minded landlord, bent on maintaining his position in competition with the industrialist, came to look on his land as subject to the same rules and therefore as justly yielding to him "profits of stock" equal to those from other investments.

This is the point of view that leads to the landlord's final overthrow. The seasonal "simple-interest" return from land must, as the speeding up process continues, lag ever further behind the cyclic "compound-interest" return from trade or manufacture. Under the English system, too, the tenant must, equally with the landlord, be regarded as an "investor".

Indeed, both of them, the landlord as mortgagor, the tenant as a borrower of capital, are frequently paying interest at commercial rates. All the necessary expenses, taxes, et cetera, incidental to the position of both of them are also fixed on similar lines. What, in an industrial community, was in any case an "inadequate" return on the investment is thus very easily converted into a dead loss. While the landlord is held up to public opprobrium as a rack-renter he is often getting less return on the cost of his land, or even of the improvement he has effected on it, than he could have got by investment in Government loans, to say nothing of successful industrial stocks. On the other hand the industrialists cry ever louder at the price that must be charged for foodstuffs if the tenant is to make a living at all. For if wages are to be increased *pari-passu* with the rise in foodstuffs the whole benefit of the "compound-interest" cycle is transferred to the agricultural interest and industrialism ceases to pay.

The *town* landlord, levying a direct toll on industrialism, has, to a considerable extent, been able thus to divert its profits into his own pockets. The attempt of the agricultural squires to do so led quite early to the anti-Corn-Law agitation. This, together with the whole "Free Trade" system designed to make a "world fit for hucksters to live in", was successful owing to the enfranchisement of the "business" class and the threat of the deluded populace, exasperated by the starvation and misery brought about by the industrial revolution, but whose demands for redress were skilfully diverted on to a wrong scent. It is to be noted that all the free-trade leaders, Cobden, Bright, Peel, et cetera, were cotton magnates.

The idea of England as "the workshop of the world" necessarily involves the idea of the ruin of home agriculture. For the ultimate idea is to live by exporting manufactures and taking payment in raw materials and food. One sometimes hears politicians talk as if it were possible to live on an export trade while confining imports to raw materials, or, at any rate, only importing, in the finished state, those things which are unproducible in our own country. This is a fallacy. It is obvious that you cannot balance an export of, for instance, finished cottons against the price you pay for the raw materials. If you try to do this you will have no margin to live on. If the margin is taken in things you cannot produce at home these are necessarily inessentials—luxuries. It is true that many such things as tea, coffee, cocoa, oranges, currants, pepper, tobacco, et cetera, have come to be almost necessaries. We shall have to deal later with some aspects of this "raising the standard of life". The present point is that these inessential "fungibles" and others of a more luxurious nature, such as wines, silks, and the rarer spices, cannot, in the long run, form the staple of the marginal import after paying for raw material. For the "cost of living" which determines the minimum wage bill must chiefly depend on the staple foods of the people, *and these* *have become such simply because they are locally produced.*

At the outset the home agriculturists were not ruined by the free import of food. This arose from two causes, the operation of which it is constantly the object of the industrialists to counteract; distance and sparseness of population in distant, "undeveloped" countries. To quicken his turnover by speeding up transport and communication—as by the telegraph, wireless, et cetera—is obviously vital to the competitive trader, dependent on the constant expansion of markets necessary to him if there is to be any profit in his increased output. For if markets do not expand there will be an inevitable glut as machino-facture develops. Thus there is a constant pressure outwards from the machino-facturing centre—originally in England—into the hitherto purely "peasant" (self-sufficient) countries, by opening new quick transport thereto, and also into the fertile wilderness, by settling "surplus" population displaced from or bred of the crowding in the industrial regions. When a certain point is reached the cheapness of production of foodstuffs on these virgin soils more than counterbalances the ever reduced cost of transport and the older country can no longer compete with them because its soil has to be farmed in accordance with the basic law of permanent husbandry; that the stock, including the human population, must feed back to the soil, by manuring, what is taken from it in the crops. This is helped, of course, by the English rent system, whereby there are two classes of capitalists, landlords and tenants, as well as a class of proletarian labourers, seeking to live from the sale of farm produce.

Whereas the settler in the backwoods or the prairie is normally playing a "lone hand".

The factor of distance did, however, enable British agriculture to keep something like its old position for a generation after the repeal of the Corn Laws. It fell in the eighties, after the opening of the great American transcontinental railways. Since then its decline—apart from the transitory flare-up of the War—has been practically continuous. There was a short rally after 1900, due mainly to the, as yet, incomplete mechanization of the prairie farming. Harvesting expenses there were kept up by the very high wages that had to be paid owing to sparseness of population. The "lone" farmer of the "Golden West"—as it was customary then to call it—could seed much more land than he could harvest with his own family or permanent hired help. This has been increasingly counterbalanced by the substitution of the machine for the man in agriculture as in manufacture. The mechanization of agriculture, with its seasonal time limits, is *entirely* labour substituting or, as it reaches countries where labour exists in adequate supply, labour displacing. It was evolved on the prairies and has thence been forced, in a desperate effort to make home farming pay, on the already depopulated countryside, driving a greater proportion of our people than ever into the industrial towns.

Now the fertility of the prairies and other virgin soils is not inexhaustible. Sooner or later a proper rotation and feeding back of fertility becomes necessary. So long as new virgin soils are available this simply leads to the treatment of the older, worked out, soils on the same lines as exhausted mines. They are abandoned. There are great tracts of such land in the Middle West of America today—to say nothing of the ruined agriculture of New England, which has suffered similarly to that of Great Britain. The ultimate end of expanding industrialism is thus the progressive devastation of the fruitful earth. It is a system of living on capital, an attempt to reap where one has not sown, to satisfy the "greed for gain which knows no limit and tends to infinity". As such it is doomed to collapse throughout the world. But at this point it is necessary again to emphasize that this is not the fruit of scientific research, or added powers over nature, but of the spirit of avarice that has guided the practical application of them in the social order in which we live. Man is not being destroyed by machines but by the base folly of men which has distorted machines into engines for the destruction of their fellows.

We are, however, as yet some way from this general collapse. The present world depression is characterized by an approach to the Gilbertian situation of general starvation because it "doesn't pay to grow wheat"—or other foodstuffs. This position of general glut is due to another aspect of the infinite greed for gain. It has tended, in the past few years, to confuse the general mind as to the real issue of industrialism. The cause of it is, of course, the piling up of interest-bearing debt. Of the details of this process, chiefly due to the insane idea that one can "eat one's cake and have it" by financing the waste of material in a great war out of loans, and that nobody will have eventually to become poorer by such destruction, we cannot here treat. But even if the slate were wiped clean—as is being done gradually—the problem of industrialism would not be solved. The technical equipment and misdirected productive organization of the modern world would remain. Only the control of it would pass to a considerable extent into other—but not into wiser—hands.

But the very system of trying to make one's country the "workshop of the world", and the undue "territorial division of labour" brought about by the dominance of the commercial ideals of living by exchange and multiplying exchanges by general speeding up, leads to a local collapse before the whole world has been exploited. This is due to the interaction of the facts of the relative importance of organic and inorganic products to human subsistence and the usurious profits obtainable from the attempt to live on "capital".

It is a general law of nature that the animal kingdom lives upon the vegetable, either directly or at one remove as beasts of prey. This means that the supply of animal—and so, of course, of human—food depends on the growth of vegetation and therefore on the rotation of the seasons. If we pass from food, a pure fungible, to the next requirements of clothing and fuel, we find that they too are practically entirely organic products. Further, clothing, which is not a pure fungible, requires more elaborate preparation than either food or fuel and has a limited life, whereas buildings, which provide the fourth essential of shelter, require even more and last proportionately longer. Indeed, in so far as they are made with greater difficulty out of inorganic stone or brick, they become, compared with the more easily worked organic reeds, timber, et cetera, practically permanent.

This general rule of the progressive indispensability and "fungibility" of commodities in human life as we pass from the inorganic to the organic, and of the greater elaboration and permanence as we pass back from the essential and fungible organic to the less essential inorganic and non-fungible, seems to run through the whole of human life. There is not space here to elaborate it. But the reader can easily follow it out for himself and must recognize its general truth if he keeps in mind the vital distinction between use and consumption and the invariable subordination of the former to the latter. A critic once denied that the first requirement of a man on a desert island was food. He contended that he first wanted a knife to cut it with! This was due to his inability to recognize this distinction. For the knife's *use* is subordinate to the food's *consumption* and in its absence a starving man would generally find means to do without it. If he could not he would still die of *starvation*, not of *knifelessness*.

But this thinking in terms of the inessential usable as at least as vital as the essential consumable is a product of the commercio-industrial world in which the critic had lived. It pervades much of the nineteenth-century economic writings, and perhaps even more of those of today. One hears of the "agricultural industry" as if it had exactly the same importance as the "gramophone industry" to human welfare. When this state of mind exists it leads inevitably to the fostering of the inessential industries at the expense of the more essential, of, for instance, the manufacture of wireless sets as a substitute for weaving, just as, in an earlier stage, manufacture was generally fostered at the expense of agriculture.

The materials of industries become progressively less and less crop products dependent on the rigid seasonal time factor, as the industries themselves produce less and less essential things. They are, therefore, more and more susceptible of the speeding up which goes with the exploitation and waste of exhaustible natural resources, minerals and so forth, instead of the constantly, but seasonally, renewed fertility of properly worked land. Thus these industries, so soon as a demand for their products can be created, tend to pay better than the older staples. But they will very soon glut their market unless there is an assimilation of the inorganic non-fungible to the organic fungible. Hence the tendency, as such things as bicycles or motor cars are popularized, is to an ever-progressive change of fashion—"new season's" models are the feature of every motor show, et cetera—and the cheap production of articles designed to wear out quickly so as to keep up a constant demand for renewal. No motor cars are made today which have the slightest chance of giving the service of, let us say, the old 5 h.p. De Dion. The whole policy is one of waste in order "to keep things going" by an ever-increasing quantity of production at the expense of quality.

This cheap shoddy manufacture of the inessential made as nearly as possible not only an essential—by advertising, and organizing life on lines that compel its use—but more and more a mere fungible, is the lifeblood of later industrialism as we see it today. It naturally tends increasingly to discount personal skill in ordinary workers by substituting the mass-produced rubbish for the craftsman's lasting work. In so doing it hastens the inevitable overthrow of the "workshop of the world" by putting, for instance, the raw Japanese coolie on a level with the British operative, so that the "foreign competition", which was at one time resistible by the more or less deserved reputation of British goods for quality, becomes irresistible.

Foreign competition grows naturally in closer proximity to the foreign market, so that it has always an advantage on the score of distance. Secondly, the newer industrial areas begin naturally to produce local staples rather than the inessentials and for these they are inevitably better placed in the matter of raw material. Thirdly, they are able to profit by the experience gained in the older factories and to start unhampered by obsolescent plant and the dead-weight of old debt, clogging capital accounts, and demanding interest. Fourthly, they command labour whose "standard of life" has not been "raised" by the earlier spate of rubbish.

Even the home market will never—under the dominance of the "Lords of Exchange"—be allowed effective protection. This is because the foreign competitor is largely set going by the investment of the surplus capital of the already industrialized country. This surplus capital really represents a paper debt from the capital of the country—the land, plant, skill, and "goodwill"—to the commercial overlords; financiers and the *rentier* class. This debt is offset by the productive section of manufacturers of such things as railways, machinery, et cetera—the "tool-makers" in effect—making the necessary equipment for export without any real payment, the financiers looking to a return by the subsequent import of the products made with the exported tools *without any corresponding export*, by way of "dividends" on their investment. Hence we arrive at the position of the "unfavourable balance of trade", which the old classical economists were so fond of assuring us was really a sign of growing prosperity.

This balance must be paid mainly in fungibles—chiefly food—because these are the natural products of the previously undeveloped countries, and also, and more especially, because only non-fungibles, such as railways, machinery, et cetera, whose use is subservient to the production of fungibles, can afford permanent "security" for the investments in foreign countries. (On the same principle a pawnbroker cannot lend money on the security of the porridge in a bowl although he can on the empty bowl.) Thus no modern English government, so long as the present rule by and in the interest of the commercial-minded is maintained, dare do more than *talk* about any real protection for *primary* home products. While on the other hand a good deal has already been done, and more may be expected, in the direction of fostering the inessential industries which tend to waste natural resources, such as gramophones, wireless sets, and all the thousand and one "knick-knacks" which fill the modern home and give a false impression of a "high standard of living" amongst people who do not even know what good food tastes like or how good clothes should wear.

Thus, in the later stages, on which England has now entered, *industrial production tends ever to become more and more of the mere rubbishy trimmings* *of life*. As one comes to rely on the exchange of these with foreign countries for one's vital needs, so one becomes of less and less real importance in the scheme of world economics. In each succeeding world depression one therefore tends to suffer first, because one's goods are the first things impoverished people dispense with, and to recover last because they are the last luxuries an enriched community adds to the amenities of its life.

It is quite true that the "untutored savage" frequently buys a Ford before he rigs himself out in a suit of clothes. But both the Ford and the clothes are to him simply luxuries. When he has been taught to regard clothes as a necessity—which is generally the first step taken in "civilizing" him—he acquires the same ideas of their relative importance in the scheme of things as his instructor. His "standard of life has been raised" and by that very process he has been made into a potential customer for more knick-knacks when he can afford them, but a potential and more powerful competitor in the realm of primary things which he feels now he must have and so learns to make for himself. As this "raising of the standards of life"—which, materially, generally means simply an assimilation of it to that of the commercialists—spreads throughout the world, it automatically sounds the doom of the original "workshop of the world".

An increasing number of the states of the world are beginning to perceive, more or less clearly, the dangers of this international dominance of the financiers through excessive commercialism. A considerable step has also been taken, since the opening of the present century, in the direction of decentralizing political governments in Europe on the true lines of nationality and national culture, as against the older Imperialism and the principle of conquering and subject races. The importance of this tendency has not been recognized in England. That it is a definite decentralizing movement has been masked by the futile paper internationalism of such things as the now moribund League of Nations, the interminable succession of "Conferences", et cetera, ever barren of result, and the sickly bleating of sentimental "pacifists", all deftly woven into the scheme of the international financial interests. *Nominally* decentralization has even taken place in the Soviet Union, apart from the new countries formed from fragments of the old Russian Empire. Actually, of course, this is held together by a highly centralized authority in Moscow, wielding the weapon of irresistible military power. But the thirty or forty republics within the Soviet Union are ready organized on paper and the inevitable end, as the hopeless economic and spiritual unsoundness of Communism takes effect, must be a breakdown that will leave them really independent.

As to the other great living political force, Fascism, that is avowedly a nationalist movement. That it demands national solidarity, as in Germany the fusion of the various hitherto partly autonomous states, again masks the essential decentralizing tendency. But that tendency is at work throughout the world and it spells the end of the commercialist era and necessitates a return in all countries to the principle of putting primary production back into its right place in the social organism.

This is a terrible prospect for England as she is today. For, quite apart from her dependence on foreign trade for the primary things and the rapidly dwindling importance of what she has to export, the whole *method* of English production is the fruit of the false ideal of commercialism, the ideal of speeding up and mechanization as ends in themselves and of dispensing with the labourer wherever possible. So that even a "back to the land" movement is in danger of being turned into a mere attempt to produce more home-grown food by the application of "up-to-date" mechanical methods on the land. These methods mean the employment of a smaller and not a larger proportion of our manpower in primary production.

If we do this we have not really begun to solve the problem. For even supposing that our present agricultural population—say, making all allowances for subsidiary occupations, some ten per cent of the whole—could, by mechanical working, feed the rest, they could not provide those others with a market for their inessential products unless they received an enormously disproportionate share of the national purchasing power. For in the long run the "national income" on which everyone must live, is a *crop* income limited by the seasonal time factor.

It is on this rock that the various "new economist" systems—the proposals of the "school of plenty"—designed to raise national purchasing power by schemes of "national dividends", raising wages all round and so on, really split. There is no space to consider them here, except to remark that the one amongst them that seems to have got nearest the truth is the one that has commanded the least public attention—that of Professor Soddy. But if agriculture were to be made so lucrative as any self-sufficient system in a mechanized world must make it, then another problem, the exact antithesis of what we have seen, must arise: the problem of rural exploitation of the towns, the success of the attempt which failed in the early nineteenth century of the "simple interest" producers to reap the benefit of the "compound interest" production of others.

This will not come about; because the unemployment and destitution in the towns that must accompany any serious advance along the lines leading to it must precipitate political revolution and chaos in which the whole of our civilization would probably perish. What is necessary is to find a balance of population living by the primary "simple interest" production as against the classes of secondary "compound interest" production, and the third class of the "culture builders" not materially productive at all. This last class has been commercialized so badly in the recent past that its existence as an economic factor tends to be ignored.

What the proper proportions of these classes may prove to be in any community at any stage of culture or scientific development is not a matter for rigid definition. If the principles are grasped the practice will work itself out. But that there are these three classes to be considered and legislated for and to be mutually protected and prevented from upsetting the economic balance by overreaching one another must be recognized.

It is because it is important at the present crisis to increase as much as possible the numbers, and not merely the output, of the "simple interest" producers in England that we stand for the discouragement of the large mechanized farm. Of the application of similar principles to the factory I do not here speak. In industry—where we have "compound interest" production—the problem is more complex, and, in many respects, less urgent. But in agriculture it is quite clear that we must immediately create a trend, not merely "back to the land", but "back to the hand". Where the balance will be found, even here, is not a matter for dogmatism. Obviously we shall stop far short of the primitive cave man, scratching the earth with a pointed stick. He could never support a real culture. Equally obviously we cannot make a great community permanently free and happy if it is dependent for its vital needs on half a dozen men who, because they control the half-dozen machines that tear up a whole depopulated countryside, can dictate its every activity by the threat of starvation. This is, however, the state of things towards which mechanization tends today. The men not necessarily being the actual "farmers", but possibly "capitalists" or a "public body".

Balance is the secret of human organization. The equilibrium is ever unstable and it is the function of the publicist to shift the weights as needed to preserve it. The dominance of the commercial idea has upset it. We of the Land Movement have perceived that one vital thing required to restore it is the shift of more men into the countryside and the prevention of their being there "eaten" by machines as their forerunners of whom Blessed Thomas More wrote were "eaten" by sheep.

A Letter on Summer Reading

My dearest Philippa:

It wouldn't be fair to pretend that the news in your last letter took me by surprise. From the first of this correspondence I have thought I heard a note of something more than a mere reader's interest in the problems presented by novels and novelists. I am glad to find I was right, and that you are hoping to be a novelist yourself before many years have passed.

Of course I don't think fiction-writing is "too frivolous a goal". You must know, if not from the solemnity with which I have taken up the challenges issued to me by you and Miss Greer then at least by the length of my letters, how large a place I give to fiction as an influence in our lives. But you were not really under any delusion; the inconsistent second half of that same sentence, where you went on to hope that I wouldn't find you presumptuous, proved that. And that shows the sounder attitude: that you realize the obligations implied in the choice of writing as a career.

Novelists are members of no guild, are bound by no code of professional ethics. Especially today they may range where they like; formlessness will be hailed as "experimental prose" and the choice of unappetizing or anti-social material will be applauded by at least half of the critics in the country (and abroad, for that matter) as evidence of extraordinary candour or honesty. And as for those who have not yet published any work, they are met by such confusion of counsel that it is a wonder they ever strike out at all. They are told to read Freud, to read Marx, or not to read at all. They are lectured on the virtues of the interior monologue, on class-consciousness as a prerequisite to sound art, and on the necessity of "breaking old forms". You must keep your wits about you if you are not to be dazed by the hail of theories, exhortations, formulas for writing that will rain on you from every side. Remember that a sensitive young writer can very easily be made into a theorist's catspaw, and that there is no more tragic situation for an artist than to find too late that he has wasted his talent to promote a temporary, fallacious, or destructive movement.

The danger is particularly grave today because of the ardour of several well known converts to the collectivist cause. Having established their reputations as literary critics before their adoption of communism, their word carries weight. Nevertheless the dictum that all important fiction today must take account of the class-struggle, and be narrated from a proletarian angle, is senseless. Man under stress, man in any dilemma, is material for fiction. That "rule" is coextensive with literature, and springs not from any decision of aesthetes or social theorists, but from the nature of humanity. The action which a man takes when faced by danger or a dilemma is always significant action; it tells us more about his character than volumes devoted to the description of him as a member of his group. The author will choose his hero and the predicament with which he is to be confronted. If the author is weak, unimaginative, or misled into using material which is uncongenial to him, the result will be a poor book. If, on the contrary, he chooses a character whom he is competent to understand and describe for us and confronts him with a situation which will result in typical action, we shall get a good book or a masterpiece. The range of possible treatments, of angles of narration, of solutions open to the author who has found the character-confronted-with-situation which shall be the nucleus of his book is infinite, and gives us such diverse satisfactions in our literature as a Prince Andrey and a Bertie Wooster.

That is when the author is left free to choose his material. If he is commanded to use a hero of only one type, to recount his story from only one angle, to choose a crisis which may be a variation on only one social crisis, he is being forbidden to function as a creative artist and ordered to work as a pamphleteer.

I go into this at such length because I believe that it was some such problem as this that was distressing you when you asked me if I agreed with Miss Greer that the writer of today must have "social consciousness". As usual, she is not defining her terms; but although I cannot imagine an adult human being above the grade of an imbecile who would not have some social consciousness, I feel sure that she has absorbed the arguments for "proletarian art" that I mention above, and that once again I find myself disagreeing with her.

I am not sorry the subject arose, since otherwise you might have found my recommendations for your summer's reading quite incomprehensible. As it is you may think that I am more anxious to equip you to cope with Miss Greer and her like than to forward your interests as a writer, but you will be wrong. If you follow the programme it will benefit you in every other department of your life as well, but it has been worked out with you and your desire to write fiction always in mind. You see I know of you that you are imaginative, sensitive, and quick. To get into the state of balance which will result in the best work of which you are capable, you must work to make yourself also reasonable, objective, and thorough, and although those are qualities which will be valuable to you in everything they are tremendously necessary to you if your intention to write is not to be, as you feared, presumptuous.

Well, then: first lay aside all modern novels for the summer. There is no danger that you will get out of touch with your period. The radio, the movies, the daily papers, and the conversation of your friends will be enough to insure you against remoteness. If a masterpiece is issued in these months and comes to my attention, I promise I will send you a telegram about it, though a masterpiece could safely wait. In the autumn you will find that you are returning to contemporary fiction with a fresh mind and a real perspective.

Next buy a good dictionary, a history of philosophy, a textbook of scholastic logic.

The dictionary is probably the only one of the three that you will see any sense in, at first. At that, you may tell me that you already have one, but I don't mean a book like that skimpy little horror I saw on your desk on my last visit, which gave a few syllabified words and one or two synonyms for each. You need the best dictionary you can afford for this summer's reading. Nothing less complete than the Concise Oxford, and in any case your dictionary must have some regard for etymologies.

The Logic—and I recommend either the *Logic* of Richard F. Clarke or the *Principles of Logic* of George H. Joyce, both in the Stonyhurst Philosophical Series —is to be your inseparable companion for the summer. You won't find it dull when you have really looked into it. You may be apprehensive, because Miss Greer is the pure type of the advanced teacher who dismisses the subject as "thinking about thinking". But if you are looking forward to a lifetime of creating characters and telling their stories, to put it on the most immediately appealing grounds for you, what better preparatory work could you do than to ground yourself solidly in the science of thought? The hour you spend on this daily will give a good disciplinary core to your summer, and when you return to reading and listening to contemporary authors and critics in the fall, the logic that you have studied will be your shield and buckler.

The history of philosophy (try to get William Turner's) is on the list for several reasons, of which I have space to give you only a few. The imaginative literature of any period always trails slightly behind its philosophy. I know this is not generally conceded. We like to consider artists as great innovators and torch-bearers, but actually they are more like the foot-messengers of the ancients. By the time they have brought us their news the situation in the intellectual homeland has altered. This is always so in ages which proliferate false philosophies. You may observe it today in the young writers who are so excitably putting forth proletarian literature. These "class-conscious" books are based on the already obsolete pidgin-philosophy of Marx, and reproduce every fallacy, every obtuseness, and a great deal of the jargon of his "dialectic materialism".

The purely instinctive artist is always at the mercy of the prevailing ideas of his period. Where the age is simple and healthy the artist may flourish without taking thought for his spiritual health. But in such a time as ours, surrounded by noxious intellectual airs, we must intentionally search for a more favourable climate. It is not at all a matter of indifference to you as a writer what philosophy you follow in your life.

Of course I am hoping, in suggesting these books, that you will come to choose the soundest philosophy of all, which is not emptily called the *Philosophia Perennis*. But the very least that can occur if you read the history of philosophy seriously is that you will no longer be held by the insularity of "modernism". Truth does not change from century to century like style in dress. Even a very little reading in philosophy will suggest to you that it is absurd to say of a fundamental truth, as is so often said these days by our provincial contemporaries, that it "is not applicable to modern men".

Of course it is unlikely that reading these two books will remake the world for you. But I am sure that from reading them you will extend the boundaries of your world. When you see men of other eras no longer as quaint, ludicrous, half-informed, but fully human and engaged in the same search for truth in every age, you will be at the threshold of your maturity. I confess that I dream of your going far enough in this summer's explorations to be in a position to contend against Miss Greer, in the fall, that one can learn as much from Aristotle as from Edmund

Wilson, and that Dante is as much an artist for our day as William Faulkner. But I must not grow Utopian.

Now as to the bulk of your reading, reading for recreation or example: choose the novelists of the eighteenth century, the poets and prose-men of the seventeenth. Do not come any farther into the nineteenth than Jane Austen. That will give you diversion enough for the time you will have. There were good writers in the century just before ours, but not a great many sane ones. Most of us think of the Victorian age as one in which men of science were in the vanguard of thought, while the men of art lagged far behind. That is wrong. The scientists of that time were not content to confine themselves to their own field; they became also philosophers, interpreters, and prophets. The artists, accepting the scientists' findings with the dreadful docility which seems to be the artist's lot, but being at the same time more imaginative and truly "farseeing" than their more rugged brethren, wrote of a world from which all earlier standards had been removed, trying to replace them as best they could with what virtues were left intact by science. However the scientists might abjure them, the artists of that day were giving them no more than the logical picture of the world as it must be if God, authority, humility, and charity were removed from it. There is more than a connection in time between the agnosticism of a Huxley and the black despair of a Hardy; there is a causal connection as well.

The nineteenth century looms too close. We see the remoter past through it as through a distorting-glass. Most of the current world movements, the philosophies, the ethics of our day come to us from the mid-nineteenth century; and that most of them lead to bewilderment, confusion, and despair you already know, even at the age of eighteen. So, for the summer, explore the earlier literature. You will be enriched both as a woman and as a writer.

If your reading in philosophy has had the results I hope, you will not be troubled by the more formal, fuller, more precise prose. Indeed in a short time you may come to wonder, as so many of us do, why we have been willing to compromise on an easy, fluent, but inexact vocabulary for our contemporary prose. Perhaps it is the consequence of persuading ourselves too thoroughly that the common man, whom we cherish with a morbid tenderness today, must not be made to feel uncomfortable in the presence of—oh, surely not his betters, since there can be no such thing—but his accidentally more educated fellows. And in America we have as well a great body of immigrants; if we can settle on a vocabulary with a minimum of difficult words or constructions in it, the immigrant will be assimilated so much the more easily. Why should he be assimilated easily? Well, there you have me. I cannot think of a good reason why admission into any society should not follow only upon the newcomer's willingness and ability to attain the best, not the laxest, standards of the stable society which he enters.

The informalities and slipshod constructions, though, have been before your eyes since you began to read for yourself. You may at first be alienated by the statelier prose. That is where the dictionary will be of help. When you find yourself drawn up before a word used in a sense that is not familiar to you, look it up. Look particularly for its sense in the language which gave it to us and see whether you cannot quite easily restore to it its original and informing meaning. ("In-forming", for instance!) Soon you will be impatient with the flabby approximations of modern prose; your own vocabulary will expand and at the same time tighten. In short, you will become a better writer.

By a very slight imaginative effort on your part, the conversations in old books will come to life again. It is worth making. If you can see those characters as having lived and breathed, and not as wooden puppets, then you will believe that they lived by just those inflexible codes of honour, where otherwise you may think that their activities as well as their conversations were part of an inhuman convention imposed by the writers of the time. Neither the manners nor the morals are as far away from us as we sometimes think. When I was young two very ancient great-aunts used occasionally to visit our outpost of New England who were devotees of "bridge-whist". In the library after dinner Aunt Grace would consult her cards, then, bowing a little across the table, would say "May I bid, Partner?" To which Aunt Henrietta, bowing in return, responded "Pray do!" It was no surprise to me to hear later that they had never received an old acquaintance after the Civil War because he had "jumped his bounty". I fear a modern novelist would depict them as Furies bent on bloodshed. Tell me, after this summer's reading, whether you cannot suggest a likelier explanation than that.

Now I must hurry over the rest of my recommendations. At last I come to a few that are as directly connected with writing as anyone could wish. It would be an excellent thing if you could in the next weeks read criticism of a sort that will show you what standards an author may fairly be expected to meet if he is to satisfy readers who remain in the great tradition. There can be no better introduction for you to such criticism than Paul Elmer More's latest volume of Shelburne Essays, *The Demon of the Absolute.* There you will see Mr. More considering some of the modern literary gods. You are no real goddaughter of mine if you do not find there the note of true criticism, at once exigent and generous. After that you will have all the earlier volumes of the essays, and there will be very little more that I need do for you in the way of literary counsel and advice. Then read Irving Babbitt's *The New Laokoon* and *Rousseau and Romanticism.* I hope you will have time for his *Masters of Modern French Criticism*, too, and to look into Sainte-Beuve.

But this is turning into a course for a year's reading, even for a book-worm like you. Occasionally, and as a great indulgence, you may, if you like, read what authors write about their own problems and methods of work. You will find the notes to Henry James's *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* (did you thank him when you enjoyed *Berkeley Square* on the screen?) full of suggestions for you. Mrs. Wharton's new book *A Backward Glance** has an excellent chapter on the origins of many of her books and characters. Ford Madox Ford's *It Was the Night-*

* A BACKWARD GLANCE *by Edith Wharton* (APPLETON-CENTURY. 385 pp. $3.00).

ingale I recommended some months ago. You will find Hawthorne's *Notebooks* fascinating, and Tchekov's as well. I am even disposed to let down the barriers on Samuel Butler where his notebooks are concerned, if you will engage not to be too overwhelmed by that sardonic genius.

Goodbye, then, for the summer. If you follow all these clues you will have very little time left for letters. I hope you will enjoy these books that I love. But if not, and if you are too courteous to tell me, I shall lie in wait for your own first book, to see whether you have dedicated it to me or to Miss Greer.

Your loving godmother,

DOROTHEA BRANDE

Science and Theology

Part II

M. C. D'Arcy

It remains, now that the way has been opened to a science of theology, to show it at work. The modern way, as I have pointed out, is to begin with experience. In so far as that means that we can start with the fact that most, if not all, peoples have believed in the existence of a God or gods and held certain beliefs about them, it can be accepted. The task of theology is to scrutinize these beliefs and all relevant religious data and ask what validity they have. This procedure is common to all scientific inquiry, but there is this peculiarity about the data of theology, that the object of the belief is not sensible or visible and that it is bound up with values, even ultimate values. I do not mean, of course, that the gods have not often been pictured and imagined as visible. It is indeed a confirmation of my argument above about the nature of our thinking, that man has habitually tended to represent to himself the divine being in physical shape, but it must be taken for granted for brevity's sake that God is by nature immaterial. Now, this being so, a free-thinker like Lord Russell is at liberty to suggest that religion is just a mode of escape from a frightening universe or animistic illusion or childish fancy. On his side the theologian must try to show that such a hypothesis does not fit the data, and if he believes in the possibility of philosophy he will be prepared to argue, from any positive datum his opponent may like to choose, that there must be a God, and will challenge the sceptic to find a flaw in his argument. This, I think, is the better method if it can be followed, as it leaves the field of hypothesis for strict argument. But, as already explained, it is not usually followed owing to the general distrust of the mind's power to extend beyond experience. Instead, we have arguments of the following kind. As a phenomenon, religion cannot be dismissed as unimportant. In the beginning it played a vital part in the life of the community; the early communities, so far from being confined in their thought to their immediate physical needs, are, if anything, too dominated by the sense of the preternatural and by religious beliefs. Nor is that religion just a mass of superstition; it is rather the vague conception of an "ocean of supernatural energy" and has for its root that sense of dependence from which all the highest manifestations of religion spring. "O You who possess the skies. I am living. I in you entrust my fate again alone upon the war path," as the Pawnee warrior sings. If, then, as the evidence seems to show, religion is the strongest force in the development and preservation of a culture, it must be taken seriously. We are all the more bound to do this when we regard its highest manifestations in the world religions and particularly in Christianity. An experience which can produce such high types of manhood as are to be found in the saints and bring before mankind such high values as the mystics speak of, must be given full measure in any worthy interpretation of life. And so it is that these experiences can be gathered together and given the status of a branch of knowledge which, if distinct in aim and method from that of the sciences, deserves nevertheless to be included within a general philosophy of man and the universe.

The correct method to be followed in theology, what may be called the philosophic method as opposed to the scientific, may be explained in the following way. The scientist, dealing with a branch of knowledge, one carefully selected field of operation, one, moreover, so delimited as to suit his method of observation and experiment, is not concerned with general principles and truths which are antecedent to his study. He assumes what is necessary and only what is necessary to help him forward, and he is at liberty to make any hypotheses he likes so long as he can verify them. The philosopher and the theologian, on the other hand, have the duty of clarifying the first principles, of searching out what must be, if there is to be anything at all; and so the philosopher asks whether there can be any such thing as knowledge at all, wherein its nature exists, what is the relation of its object to it, what different kinds of objects there can be, what sort of being, again, a knowing subject must be and how he is related to his desires, whatever they may be, and so on. If the scientist takes for granted observation, the philosopher examines its meaning and possibility; if the former again finds the notion of evolution fruitful, the philosopher analyzes it and points out that it can have no meaning without an unchanging background, that without a permanent unity of some sort changes would be unrelated and bewilder us like a perpetual Jack-in-the-Box. What, then, the theologian has first to do is to show that change, contingency, the imperfect, the relative, imply something absolute, and he concentrates his attention on what this absolute must be.

This procedure is clearly different from that of science, and roughly it can be described as deductive. It consists in examining what is supposedly ultimate, criticizing this by means of the first principles of reason, which are in their turn subjected to an analysis, and so establishing what must be and what follows from the admission of these ultimates. The subject matter of philosophy is therefore one which of its nature remains constant, and it may be said to cover that body of experience which is at the same time the most profound and the most common, that great human heritage which draws together into one family people from all times and from all the ends of the earth. It is to be found recorded in the Greek anthology, in the tombs of Mycenae and the papyri of Egypt, as in Shakespeare and the modern novel—the love of a mother for her child and a child for its toys, the melancholy over the passing of what is fair, the respect for justice which drove Antigone to her fate, the longing felt by a Socrates for perfection, the warp and woof of life, the mystery of the self and its destiny, and God. Reflection on this commonwealth provides the philosopher with his material, and it was as possible for a wise man of the Egyptian dynasties, or Periclean Athens, to arrive at the truth about most of these matters as it is for a thinker of the twentieth century.

It would seem to follow from this that theology does not advance in the same way as science. Certainly it differs from science, and the complaint of

Kant against it that it is stationary is really its glory. There must be at least one form of knowledge which escapes relativity if we are to have any standards at all and avoid complete scepticism. It is nevertheless more accurate to say that it does advance, though in a way different from that of science. Theologians sometimes use the word development to describe this, and two considerations will show what is meant. A child has some distinctions in its mind between the pleasant and the hurtful, between good and bad; it is taught proverbs and maxims and it clothes invisible beings in fanciful and sensible garb. In time it comes to realize what has been so far notional, to grasp vividly, for instance, such a saying as "that it is sweet and fair to die for one's country", and to discard the pictorial when meditating on spiritual realities. There is here a growth; meanings are realized and new relations understood. Now what happens to the child happens, too, in the advance of culture; the habit of imagination gives way to philosophy; the interest in external nature, in other men and women, in new worlds to conquer, as seen in the first vigour of Athens or Elizabethan England, in the beginnings of novel writing, is succeeded by a new taste for which the self is the subject and the psychological novel the ideal. This seeing of what is permanent in new situations causes an advance in knowledge different from that in science. The second consideration bears less on theology than on other branches of philosophy. It is this, that though philosophy, as I have explained, has its own domain, the boundaries between it and science are not always clear cut. This is well seen in psychology; the problems of perception, of consciousness, of free will, of the self, of the relation of the mind and body can be rightly claimed, I think, to be philosophic, and therefore as open to a right explanation from a Plato as from a Bergson, but, in fact, a modern writer ought to be better off because he knows far more about physiology and biology and so can avoid the temptations which beset the earlier philosophers to generalize beyond their premises and take over assumptions which subsequent science would show to be unjustifiable.

The theologian, taking the data of human experience, seeks to show a rational foundation for it and formulate what is confused in clear conceptions; and he also holds that the proper way to do this is to launch out on to the sea of reality with confidence in the power of the intellect to apprehend something of the ultimate nature of that real. The majority of philosophers have followed this route, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, and others, though since the time of Kant it has been abandoned by many. Kant's position precluded him from using arguments resting on the real as it is in itself and he criticized the old proofs as unsound because they contained as an implicit premise the old ontological argument. His point comes to this: the cosmological argument relies on two premises; "being which is contingent or conditioned involves the existence of being which is necessary or unconditioned" and "necessary being is supreme perfection". Now in the second premise it is only because the notion of perfect being is thought to involve necessarily its own existence that the conclusion follows—and this assumption is illegitimate. This criticism would be valid if Kant's theory of the limitation of our knowledge were correct, but other philosophers and scientists who do not accept his account of knowledge have no right to quote his conclusions, unless they arrive at them by an independent argument. It is their assurance, I fear, which contains what Kant called "a perfect nest of dialectical assumptions", such as, for instance, that the category of causality belongs only to the world of phenomena and may even be discarded there, that an infinite series is possible and that therefore the argument to a first cause has no validity, that one cannot get out of experience more than is contained in it. None of these objections touches the classical arguments for the existence of God, for they ignore the claim of the orthodox theologians that metaphysics is possible. This claim is not just an assumption; it is the condition of knowing and implicit in all assertions of knowledge. If I can never say that a truth is so sure that no further knowledge of reality can contradict it, then I can be driven finally into complete scepticism, and that itself would involve one inexpugnable truth. Now if there is a single truth which it is impossible to contradict, it follows that I know something about reality which holds true in every domain of it, that I have broken down the barrier which appeared to restrict me to one category of being. There is no truth, therefore, in saying that out of finite experience I can get only finite reality, that the notion of cause is empirical and, as such, inapplicable to metaphysical conceptions. Of all that is and can be I know something and something sufficiently common to allow me to pass from one part of reality to another, from matter to spirit, from the sensible to the intelligible, from the contingent to the absolute. These various orders are not entirely disparate, as many, following Descartes, have maintained or implied; I can make statements which hold good for them both and for any possible order, even the divine, if it exist. It is a mistake, therefore, to say that we know only the material, the sensible, the phenomenal or only the spiritual, the conceptual, or that the two are totally alien the one from the other. It is also an unjustified assumption to say that what we call the real is limited to what we experience and is at most conditioned and finite. In our very first judgement we transcend experience, for we say that something is such and such, and it may be that both from the point of view of the judgement and from the nature of the object asserted to be, we may be forced to affirm also some existent, absolute subject or being. And this is precisely what the theologian does affirm when he says that existent, contingent being implies an absolute being or source and that every act of judgement, being in its own way absolute and yet progressive, can be explained only as a function of some absolute or in virtue of it.

All who admit the possibility of metaphysics—and the alternative is a self-destructive scepticism—will be bound to agree with what has just been said. It belongs to the prolegomena of a sound theology. What we have now to determine is the nature of this absolute or whole, for the preliminary remarks just made are at a first glance compatible with the views of a Spinoza, a Hegel, or an Aquinas, with monism or monotheism. The arguments used to prove it go a certain distance to show what its nature must be, the arguments, namely, from effects and from contingency, from dependent essence and dependent existence, and they can be supplemented by evidence from design, from conscience and the unsatisfied urge of our nature to an effortless beholding of complete truth and the possession of what is infinitely desirable. The arguments, I say, can carry us a certain distance. If a distinction in the real order is required between what is absolute and what is contingent, between the dependent and the self-sufficient, then it is enough to show that what is perishable and finite is not mere appearance, for a solution on the lines of pantheism or monism to be ruled out. The perfect and unchanging cannot be composed of what is limited and changeable, and I might add that the expression, Reality as a Whole, is even more misleading than the word Nature. There must be some kind of meaning in the expression, and some kind of unity which allows us to call anything whatsoever real, but this unity must be compatible with real differences and substantial differences.

The relation of a human being to nature is different from that of a tail to the dog to which it belongs; we cannot class together under one identical name such variously assorted objects as thoughts, trees, penguins, cocktails, unicorns, and persons. If we take persons, for example, we imply a certain kind of nature, privacy within that nature, and a degree of independence and unshared responsibility. What kind of relation can they have to that which has been proved to exist, namely, a real object or subject which is completely and supremely real? It is manifestly impossible to work out in a few lines the answer to this difficult question, and so I must be content with just stating dogmatically the conclusion that since the nature of human persons, though perfect in its kind, is essentially limited and their existence finite, they must be dependent in these two regards on a being which in its turn, being complete and absolute, must be transcendent, sovereign, and personal.

To call this supreme reality personal will seem to many a step quite unjustified by the argument just given. Even those who are ready to admit a metaphysical discussion of the kind I have sketched make a sharp distinction between the god of philosophy and the God men worship in religion. Philosophy, they say, may serve to prove the existence of some vague, abstract, absolute, or necessary being, but this is little more than a confession that something must exist, which for the sake of a word may be called divine, though its nature be unknown. Religious experience cannot be content with such a dark mystery and overcomes the difficulty at a cost; it takes the best that we can think in the way of human ideals and so clothes God with personal attributes. He becomes majestic, wise, just, loving, and lovable. Is this justifiable? Many would distinguish in their reply between the certainty of philosophical truth and the certainty needed for religion. The former is absent from this procedure, but religious experience does justify us in regarding God as personal and loving. If we look at history we find that mankind has chosen one of two ways in its theology; either, like the Hindus, to renounce all description of God and in that renunciation find peace, or make up a "myth" as worthy of him as possible. The West has followed the latter way, creating God after its own image, and experience has shown that it must contain some truth, no matter how anthropomorphic that truth be.

Now in this explanation the necessity of anthropomorphism is taken for granted. If, as I believe is possible, human thinking can escape this weakness, theology will rest on far surer foundations. No doubt the habit of humanizing God has been very prevalent in religion, but that does not prove that it is necessary; and if what I have said of knowledge in a former paragraph be true, the means to overcome the habit are at our disposal. Human knowledge has two characteristics, that it is true and that it is limited. As true, it encompasses the whole realm of the real; as imperfect, it is suited to focus on only one province of it, the province of the sensible which can be measured. To put this in another way: If we suppose that an animal, such as a fox, is without reason, then the acquaintance which it has with external objects will be limited by its organism and animal faculties, and it will interpret all by its own experience and have no interest in things as they are in themselves. That is why an animal has no absolute standards in conduct, is indifferent to beauty and humour and knows nothing of truth. As Xenophanes of Colophon said: "A horse would call the gods a horse, an ox, a god ox-shaped." On the other hand, the differentiating mark of man is that he can know objects, not in terms of himself, but as they are in themselves, and though he finds this very difficult, by dint of reasoning and induction and the very power of the mind itself to criticize itself, he can succeed to some extent.

To see how this can be done let me recall one or two observations already made. The significance of our conceptions goes beyond what they can be said to represent. For instance, some of the recent conceptions of the universe are quite unimaginable, and we have always to be careful of confusing what we may be bound to think about space or time with our fancy or imagination of them. Again, while we may be convinced that plants and animals have life, and that animals have a sensitiveness and awareness akin to our own, the differences are so striking as to forbid us to identify their experience with our own. A dog, if it could give the subject thought, would be wise in surmising that some of its master's behaviour showed anger, and wiser still if it guessed that the anger differed in many respects from its own. Now this principle of comparison and judgement can be applied to beings who are as much above us as animals are below us, and it is applicable even to God. If we find in ourselves or other things or persons any characteristic which in its pure condition is without flaw, we can attribute it to God, keeping in mind at the same time the proportion which must be observed between it as embodied in a finite object and in the divine being. By this means we are enabled to escape the Scylla and Charybdis of Hindu negation and anthropomorphism. Our thoughts, so to speak, circle round God and are not lost in the empty air, but before they can be said to be true of Him they have to be divested of the human livery with which we clothed them. If we ask can God be spatial or in time, developing or stationary, harsh and revengeful, forgetful or reflective, we can answer straightway in the negative, for all these characteristics imply by their very nature imperfection of some sort. If, on the other hand, we ask can

God be just and loving, wise and personal, we must reflect on these qualities to see if they contain within their meaning any flaw. Wisdom, for instance, may well be perfect, for it means that to the possessor of it there is nothing hidden, that he can enjoy in the most intimate way conceivable all that is and all that can be desirable. That such a form of knowledge is possible we have no reason to doubt, though it is far different from our own. We have no acquaintance with it, and consequently when we attribute it to God we have to free the word wisdom from all the limitations we impose upon it. Like the dog in its meditation on anger, we attribute rightly the virtue of wisdom to God, and so make a correct statement about His nature, while at the same time we refrain carefully from calling our wisdom God's.

This is the method whereby we elaborate a theology, and analyze with what truth and in what sense we can speak of God as cause and end, as transcendent and immanent, and by means of it we can bridge the gulf which separates the necessary being of philosophy from the God of religious experience. Thus both parties are mutually benefited, for theology is relieved of its abstractions and religious experience is rinsed by cold thinking. It must be confessed, however, that even so our knowledge of God and His ways remains very dark. The highest religious experiences are the reward of the few and they cannot always be communicated, and our thought about God, while, as I have explained, it can be true and informative, remains nevertheless oblique and fringed with mystery. Nothing else, of course, could be expected; indeed, if a writer were to make God easy of access and neighbourly, such familiarity would be almost a certain sign that he had lost sight of the true nature of divinity. This is the element of truth in the old saying that no one could see God and live.

And with this I may end, as I have contented myself with trying to describe what human thought and human experience left to itself can do to make a science of God. There is another theology which claims to rest not on what man can think of God, but on what God has deigned to say of Himself to man, and this is the specifically Christian theology. Though it claims to be in accord with reason, its first principle and ground are not reason but divine authority and revelation, and therefore it would need a new chapter to describe its method and subject-matter. Nevertheless, it can be invoked to throw light on the certain and tentative results of the theology of which I have been treating. This latter is bound by its very nature to leave much unsaid, to record far-off facts, leaving their relation in a luminous mist. It is the noblest of all studies and at the same time the most humiliating; it keeps itself straight by reliance on the most fundamental principles of human thought and by discovering a means to apply what is best in human experience to God without error, due regard having been paid to the relativity in our ideals. But apart from the difficulty of keeping one's head on the soaring pinnacles of such thought, it is humiliating to realize the imperfection of it. There may seem to be proof, as Sir A. Fleming has said, "that the physical Universe is not in itself eternally enduring", that it is

> not, therefore, self-produced or self-maintaining, but the result of a Creative power, and requires a continually

operative Directive Agency. There are unquestionably in the physical Universe things that stimulate our appreciation of order, beauty, adaptation, numerical relations, and purpose in our minds—we who are thinking, feeling persons—and hence the qualities which excite these psychic reactions must have been bestowed on the Universe by a Sentient Intelligence at least as personal as ourselves.

We may agree with Dr. Whitehead that there must be a God as a source of limitation and determination in nature, "the one systematic complete fact, which is the antecedent ground conditioning every creative act". We may be sure that the world, whether it be supposed to be eternal or temporal, is dependent on something else for its existence and continuity, that its meaning has not been imposed on it by us, that the labours of science go only to make these truths more manifest. Nevertheless, when all has been said and thought, we see only the shadow of God's nature and know only the rumours of His presence. The last word of unaided human thought on the relation of God to the Universe, the problem of predestination and free will, the meaning of evil and the final destiny of man, is such that it raises as many questions as it answers, and there is no unlocking of the many seals of the divine volume unless God should deign of his own accord to make himself known by Revelation.

REVIEWS

Beecherism *

SAINTS, *Sinners, and Beechers* is the latest addition to the new *genre* established by J. T. Adams's *The Adams Family* and Hartley Grattan's *The Three Jameses: A Family of Minds.* The author, grandson of Harriet Beecher Stowe, chronicles, in successive sections compounded of quotations, anecdotes, and personal comments, the careers of the Reverend Lyman Beecher, his seven sons and his four daughters. Mr. Stowe's attitude toward his "ancestors" is good-humouredly detached and nonchalant. From the vantage-ground of modernism, he looks upon their hopes and fears, and especially their occasional tense concern for their "souls", with slightly patronizing tolerance; but at the craft of condescension he is a modest amateur in comparison with many contemporary practitioners. He pretends to no fixed standards of thought or conduct, and does not attempt to prove the Beechers good and great; puts but as an hypothesis Theodore Parker's declaration that Lyman was the "father of more brains than any other man in America"; and is content to find the Beechers what it may at once be conceded that they were—"amusing, lovable, and outrageous".

The family pattern seems clear enough. The typical Beecher was ungenteel, unconventional, carelessly dressed, absent-minded, colloquial and pungent of diction, given to repartee and homely illustration, a "feeler" rather than a thinker, a rhetorician rather than a philosopher, avid of power over the masses, possessed of the claim to special acquaintance with the Divine purpose for the universe, a reformer and prophet.

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* SAINTS, SINNERS, AND BEECHERS *by Lyman Beecher Stowe* (BOBBS-MERRILL. 450 pp. $3.75).

Theodore Parker's judgement may be true if the brains are to be measured quantitatively. *More* brains, perhaps; but what was their quality? The Beechers were not thinkers; except by Tolstoi, Mrs. Stowe's most famous book can never have been regarded as "literature", and her best novel, *Oldtown Folks*, is too carelessly composed, diffuse, and improvisatory to rank as art, necessary as it is for the historian of New England thought and life: apart from her, the Beechers could lay no claim to literary reputation. Orators and reformers and educators and organizers, they worked zealously for the causes of their day, and now, except as personalities, are forgotten.

But Mr. Stowe rightly sees the Beechers as representatives, and leaders, of the nineteenth-century declension from Calvinism to humanitarianism. Lyman, the father, suffered the initial slip from the rigour of his pristine faith when his first two wives boldly challenged propositions of his creed. In later life he underwent trial for heresy; and though he proved the technical victor, it was through clever dialectic in which he seems not to have believed. Even as early in his career as his pastorate in Boston, conservatives viewed him as a compromising mollifier of Calvinism; and though, like the Edwardsean New-Schoolmen, he zealously promoted revivals, and though he belligerently assailed the prosperous Unitarians, he departed from the old reliance on logic and the "inner life", to turn reformer and politician. His Hanover Street Young Men's Association, the progenitor of many similar organizations,

> appointed committees on various city matters. They secured the passage of laws prohibiting lotteries on Boston Common and booths for the sale of strong drinks. . . . The wicked steamboat excursions to Nahant, in violation of the Sunday laws, they had stopped.

Beecher's children all proved, in varying degrees, heretical and humanitarian. Edward and Charles believed in the pre-existence of the soul; Charles, Harriet, and Isabella were students of spiritualism. Henry and Thomas had little taste for theology or any other sort of close and sustained thinking. Isabella and Catherine were feminists. Thomas, the most attractive figure in Stowe's book, established the first institutional church in this country, and himself designed the parish house, incorporating a gymnasium, a library, a theatre, a dance-hall, and a pool-room. Henry appears to have turned Plymouth Church, to which for nearly four decades he attracted audiences of three thousand, into an auditorium, a lecture hall where current notions and local themes received pronouncement, and topical allusions spiced the discourse. He did not hesitate to bring political issues and candidates into his sermons and to defend the practice. In brief, the Beechers show Protestantism well on its way to its present character: a decline of interest in theology, the substitution of private opinion for faith in an objective Revelation, emphasis on the parish house rather than the church, on lecturing rather than preaching, on geniality rather than moral principles, on legislation rather than regeneration. The Beechers were "liberals".

To those who admired them, they must have seemed prophets; to those who disliked them—and one could not remain neutral—they must have seemed egotists and exhibitionists. Their revolt from the standards supplied by the old Calvinism, which today is once again beginning to be respected, left them free to follow that "inner light" which so often proves the mere smoky torch of the temperamental self. That the Beechers were in the main sincere we need not doubt; but surely the time has come to declare that *sincerity* is not, as popularly supposed, the *unum necessarium.* Fools and cranks have as much share in that commodity as the wise. The Beechers' power was in large measure irresponsible and dangerous because it proceeded from egocentrism posing as Revelation. In later life Mrs. Stowe boldly asserted of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "God wrote that book". Though the Beechers constantly shifted their views, they carried the divine authority with them through their fluctuations, and tried to carry their congregations too.

Doubtless the church needs its prophets as well as its priests, but then it must be sure that it can discern true prophets from false; it must "try the spirits", and not confound the "pulpit personality" with the man of God. In these days of church advertising—or should one say *preacher advertising*?—we read with particular relish one of the many anecdotes related by Mr. Stowe. In the absence of Henry Ward Beecher, his brother Thomas, but the local celebrity of Elmira,

N. Y., occupied the pulpit of Plymouth Church. The "auditorium" was crowded as usual; but when a strange parson came to the preacher's desk, many began to retreat. Then the stranger, raising his hand to summon attention, shouted out: "All who have come to worship Henry Ward Beecher may go; all who have come to worship God may stay."

Mr. Stowe has written a competent and entertaining book; and the Beechers assembled in family reunion make an instructive exhibit. For a more distinguished and intellectual treatment of the three eminents, Lyman, Henry, and Harriet, the reader will still turn to Miss Constance Rourke's *Trumpets of Jubilee*.

AUSTIN WARREN

"Progressive" Indoctrination *

A TRIVIAL book has been written by an assistant professor of education in New York University and dedicated to the dean of the school of education in that university. If this fact involved only a professor and a dean it would not be alarming, but unfortunately it is symptomatic of what is going on all over the country in the field once known as pedagogy but now known as "professional education", the field in which prospective teachers are indoctrinated in the science of teaching. As the author himself declares, he wrote his book not only for his own students in a course on contemporary educational trends but also to meet a "long felt" need on the part of "the great majority of American schoolmen".

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* MODERN EUROPEAN EDUCATORS AND THEIR WORK *by Adolph E. Meyer* (PRENTICE-HALL. 241 pp. $2.50)

Presumably the great majority of American schoolmen will applaud his effort, for three sufficient reasons. The first reason Professor Meyer himself supplies: "Because of their linguistic limitations many American educators have been markedly isolated from the rest of the educational world." Often they cannot even read French and German, despite the requirement, for the doctor's degree, of a "reading knowledge for the purposes of research" (a requirement which many educationists regard as onerous, unjust, and irrelevant). Still oftener, they have failed to attain that "reasonably accurate and refined use of the mother-tongue" which Charles W. Eliot regarded as the only acquisition essential to culture; no other group of American writers, not even the journalists, uses the English language so inaccurately and crudely. As for the other languages that would seem to be involved in the scope of Dr. Meyer's book—Italian, Dutch, Danish, and Russian—even Dr. Meyer, judging from his bibliography, cannot read all of the indispensable literature on his subject.

American schoolmen will welcome this book for another reason: it describes some European educators and their work in the form of what might be termed tabloid sketches. "Professional education" in the United States is not greatly concerned with the educational practices of the rest of the Occident. To be sure, Europe cannot be avoided in the course, generally very badly taught, in the history of education from Plato to John Dewey; but few are the educationists who conceive that we have much to learn from the educational purposes and methods of Europe —for important illumination one goes to psychology, sociology, and statistics. Dr. Meyer accordingly does a useful thing in disposing of nine European countries in 227 loosely printed pages, with blank pages separating the fourteen chapters. This will leave plenty of room for the study of substantial works on psychology, sociology, and statistics in relation to education.

What little the book offers will be applauded for a third reason: it ignores all European educators and educational practices except those which are known as "progressive" but which could just as logically be known as "retrogressive". While Germany is allotted four chapters, France gets only two, "Roger Cousinet and Free Group Work" and "The Ecole des Roches", the former of which begins with this passage:

> In education France is conservative. Not only is her education pinned down by a cultural tradition of ancient standing, but her centralized educational organization is of such a nature that experimentation among the schools is very difficult. Inflexible state regulations clutter up the road to educational reform, and a fairly rigid curriculum is served to all youngsters who attend the public schools. Examinations made up by the state must be passed by all the children of France. In the face of such hindrances the French public schools naturally have not been able to advance very far in progressive education.

Poor France! "Pinned down" by a cultural tradition, suffering from regulations that "clutter up" the road to reform, with a curriculum "served" like rations to all her children, with standards (and high ones at that) to be met by all students, poor France faces manifold educational "hindrances" that explain —what? Why she is so inept in the arts and sciences? Why she is so lacking in efficiency, culture, and the great art of happiness? Why all Frenchmen are inflexibly alike, and none have creative minds and free personalities? Why Frenchmen are wanting in the one essential acquisition, a reasonably accurate and refined use of the mother-tongue? If France would only listen to her prophet Rousseau and his American disciple Dewey, she might yet become great among the nations. What she needs is "*La Nouvelle Education*, which in English [Dr. Meyer conveniently adds] means simply the New Education".

NORMAN FOERSTER

Dewey's Latest Disciple*

THERE was once a time when many of those who, in this country, are able to sustain hopes for the future of American culture, despite all the political, economic, and moral evidence to the contrary, were disposed to look hopefully towards the emerging figure of Mr. Lewis Mumford. Among all the younger leaders of liberalism, his work engaged perhaps the most sympathy. His *Sticks and Stones*, with its real understanding of the merits of our classic and colonial architecture, and its scorn and distrust of the skyscraper era, is still readable; his *The Golden Day*, though it exaggerated the merits of the New England School, and probably did not deserve the praise Mr. Santayana gave it, was yet sensitively aware of the fact that we had, at one time, something resembling the beginnings of a great literature. But, alas, the day is now long past since Mr. Mumford ceased to show signs of making any mental progress. His *Melville* was simply an extended case study of the dichotomy implicit in all New England thought; his *The Brown Decades* only re-echoed feebly the thesis of *The Golden Day*, and now, in *Technics and Civilization*, we find Mr. Mumford, quite at ease on the Parnassus of American mechanical capitalism, sinking into the deadly net carefully provided all American Liberals by that great misleader of thought, Professor John Dewey.

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* TECHNICS AND CIVILIZATION *by Lewis Mumford* (HARCOURT, BRACE. 495 pp. $3.50).

Mr. Mumford, like all the other Dewey disciples scattered over the face of the earth, makes now only one mental assumption: that mechanical progress is the only progress; that art, religion, morals, the whole of life, the good, the true, the beautiful, are only useful adjuncts, "instrumentalisms", by-products of a world-wide mechanical process which seeks its own perfection. But unlike Professor Dewey—or that still more preposterous upholder of the same gospel, Thorstein Veblen—Mr. Mumford makes this assumption only to try to modify it. He has read enough books, seen enough pictures, to be aware of the fact that after all art and literature have claims on our attention that are not easy to shake off—and which the machine itself is powerless to create. He is moreover faced with the nineteenth century, and its result; the tragic *débâcle* of liberalism which followed the European War. Nor can he deny—though he would sentimentally like to do so—that the War itself was the outstanding triumph of the mechanical process (which according to John Dewey automatically spells progress) in our day.

What, then, does Mr. Mumford do? He first sets out to prove that the mechanical process, the industrial epoch, far from being—as was previously assumed by everybody—an affair of yesterday, began away back in the eleventh century when accurate time-keeping mechanisms were first introduced into the monasteries! This great discovery so tickles Mr. Mumford's naïve and trustful fancy that he sits down and compiles a list of inventions that have come into common use since the tenth century, and proves beyond a shadow of doubt that windmills and watermills were actually in use in Holland in the seventeenth century! But of course there were also mines during that period, and the labour conditions in those mines were not such as to delight Mr. Mumford's humanitarian instincts. Also there were cannon foundries, and Mr. Mumford, like all disciples of the lofty-souled Dewey, is a pacifist and so objects to cannon foundries. He wishes, naturally, to eat his cake of beneficent mechanical progress and to have it too. He forgets the outstanding fact that it was the nineteenth century, the age of triumphant machinery, that was the century of violent and destructive warfare, not the thirteenth; and that the twentieth century is likely to beat the record of the nineteenth in this respect.

Yet even Mr. Mumford, despite his warping of the facts of all history to prove his sentimentally motivated thesis that machinery of a sort did function even in seventeenth-century Holland, is brought to a halt by the barrier of the nineteenth century. Here, it is obvious, is a different kind of mechanical civilization from that of steady, sleepy, good-tempered Holland, with its windmills and watermills; a civilization whose gods were no longer Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Spinoza, but Malthus, Darwin, Cobden, Bentham, Thaddeus Stevens, Cecil Rhodes, Jim Fisk, and Jay Gould. Even a blind disciple of Dewey, even the most arrant of all humanitarian pacifists, must sooner or later see the difference between windmills and watermills worked by craft guildsmen, and coal mines and factories worked by sweated wage-slaves, and stopped by strike-breakers. The communist would say that the fuel-consuming factories and coal mines and oil wells of the nineteenth century and later were the next stage in the "natural" development of this mechanical process that Mr. Mumford has seen developing back in Holland of the seventeenth century. He would also say that the next step was for the working man to rise up, "expropriate the expropriators", and accept the dictatorship of the proletariat, and then work for the sake of the communist state. And of course the communist is perfectly right, if one grants the first premise that the age of iron, coal, and steam was the *natural* outgrowth of the age of water, wood, and stone, and if one grants as well the second premise that the historical process is completely irreversible. The Communist State—that is to say the slave state—is the logical end of every form of laissez-faire, industrialist capitalism.

But Mr. Mumford is unwilling to grant this. As I pointed out before, like all good liberals, he wishes both to eat and to have his cake of mechanical progress along with the cake of human liberty, which mechanical progress—as Thomas Jefferson saw—continually threatens and makes vain. So he invents a few fine phrases to soothe himself with. He calls the period of machinery from 1000 A. D. to about 1750, the "eotechnic" age of machinery. This is followed by the "paleotechnic" age of coal, iron, steam, slums, and human degradation which runs from 1750 to, apparently, 1914. Since the War it appears (again according to Mr. Mumford) that we have really gotten into a new age, the "neotechnic", where the grime of our factories will vanish, thanks to electric power-houses, where the saurians of industry will disappear, where everybody will live in garden villages, read the works of Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright and Mr. Waldo Frank and others of Mr. Mumford's friends, practice eugenic sex (with the appropriate birth-control), and subscribe to something Mr. Mumford calls "basic communism". Such is the Utopian vision we are offered, at the end of nearly five hundred closely-printed pages of text.

It is not only a misleading vision, but it is demonstrably false to the facts. Though it is quite true that the age of electric power-transmission that we are just entering *might* be used to balance the topheavy structure of mass-productive capitalism, and so produce something like a return to the household economy and home productive methods of our forefathers (as Ralph Borsodi has pointed out); there is yet so far not the slightest evidence that it will ever be used to do so. On the contrary it is much more likely to be used in order to break down the last resistance of the peasants, as in Russia. Nor can either Mr. Mumford's "basic communism" or the sterner and far more inhuman communism of Karl Marx alter the fact that so long as machinery remains in the hands either of great capitalist corporations or of a soviet state, and so long as people in general subscribe to the belief that it is in the mechanical process alone that salvation is to be found, we shall continue to have a society that gives no guarantee whatsoever of a good life, or of anything beyond a servile life. The only solution is not economic but political; it is not only political but moral; it is not only moral but religious. We must build again, within the framework of the twentieth-century mechanical state, the mediaeval state of the guildsmen. In other words, we must tend towards the corporate state of European Fascism. Certain things, such as coal, oil, artificial lighting, water-power, railroads, insurance, inasmuch as they are a common good, must cease to be subject to capitalist exploitation, and become public property. Certain other things, such as tables, chairs, clothes, the technique of farming and dairying should become as diversified as possible, should be spread about among as many individual owners as possible. And finally, there should be one religion, one moral doctrine, binding all.

That this Utopia would be more difficult to realize than Mr. Mumford's, may be admitted. But the trouble with Mr. Mumford's Utopia is that it is too pragmatic. It says, in effect, let us go on tinkering with the machine a little further and let us see where it will lead us. So Mr. Mumford subscribes to the idiotic and quite gratuitous fallacy of the gifted but irresponsible Frank Lloyd Wright, in supposing that form can be obtained out of function, that mechanical necessity will dictate its own new forms, which is pure and simple nonsense, disproved by Mr. Wright's own architectural practice. Did the mechanical necessity of Greek civilization dictate the Parthenon or was it the Greek religion that did so? In short, here is a Utopia that leads us nowhere, because it has never defined its goal in advance. Only a religiously-minded thinker should ever write a Utopia—and Mr. Mumford is not a religiously-minded thinker. After five hundred pages of Mr. Mumford's "deus ex machina" arguments, no god emerges; we still face humanity crying in the desert for some faith not tainted with the brand of modern progressivism.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

Lawrence As a Soldier*

CAPTAIN LIDDELL HART'S latest book is less strictly military, and—to at least one reader—considerably less satisfactory than his earlier writings. As an acrimonious critic of post-Napoleonic warfare, the author is usually able and always amusing. His study of Sherman is an excellent piece of work; his criticism of World War strategy in his *Foch* is worth reading.

The present volume continues the major faults of the earlier work: there is still a sophomoric tendency to set up straw men of orthodox strategy, and to demolish them by elaborate bombardment; Clausewitz takes his usual beating as the author of all subsequent error. One wonders why Clausewitz should be lumped

* COLONEL LAWRENCE *by B. H. Liddell Hart* (DODD, MEAD. 365 PP. $3.75).

with blind advocates of the offensive; and why "concentration at the decisive point" should be taken to mean battering the strongest point of the enemy line.

Liddell Hart's main thesis is that Colonel Lawrence's conduct of the Arabian sideshow entitles him to a place among the Great Captains. An amateur of mediaeval military architecture and of the French eighteenth-century strategical writers, Lawrence beat the British professional soldiers at their own game, and accomplished tremendous strategical results with a very small expenditure of men and materiel—largely through his disregard of the tenets of conventional nineteenth-century strategy.

It appears, moreover, that the desert campaign is to point the way to the warfare of the future. Lawrence, freed from the stultifying effects of the ordinary military career, and from the warping of the ordinary military discipline, has discovered the new strategy. In his enthusiastic acceptance of armoured cars, and his post-War interest in tanks and airplanes, he lends support to the vociferous mechanization school of British military thought.

Of the value of the Arab revolt to the Allied cause, and of Lawrence's consummate skill in its management, there can be no question. Nevertheless, my impression remains that Lawrence was essentially an odd bird in a peculiarly useful place. The author's argument that his is not merely a guerrilla genius, leaves me cold. For the strategy of the Arab Revolt, one needs Arabia—a desert fringed by settled country, and a nation in revolt against the enemy. It is unlikely that the lessons of an irregular war, with treason in the enemy command, and a population indifferent or disloyal, can furnish many lessons for regular and civilized war.

The strategy of the campaign seems not so much heterodox, as a most skillful adaptation of orthodoxy to peculiar conditions. Avoidance of battle and wearing down by pinpricks are the conventional methods of guerrillas; the wide swings to the hostile rear, the flexibility of plans, the ingenious deceptions—all are daring and exceptional, but in no way contrary to conventional military teaching. In fact, if one accepts the analogy of the desert to the ocean (Liddell Hart's own apt comparison), there is nothing in the sudden raids from desert to settled country that a naval strategist would not suggest. That Lawrence's generalship on a small scale is superior to the grand strategy of the late War, is doubtless true; it is scarcely high praise.

On the other hand, Lawrence's slight and specialized experience with airplanes and mechanized weapons seems hardly to qualify him as an expert on their future. He saw the air force in a country where concealment was difficult, and ground defense nonexistent; and he had no experience in the difficulty of the supply and upkeep of large bodies of motor vehicles.

Moreover, if the author intends to imply that the attack on material resources and the seeking of "a creeping paralysis" instead of a quick decision, are applicable to war as well as rebellion; then he is prepared to carry into future strategy the worst evils of recent warfare, and to renounce the chief advantages that mechanization and a return to professional soldiery promise in shortening the duration and lessening the destruction of wars. Colonel Lawrence's views on the deadening effect of discipline are unconvincing, particularly as they conflict with his own praise of the disciplined German detachments with the Turkish army in retreat. "Their sections held together in firm rank, sheering through the wrack of Turk and Arab like armoured ships, high-faced and silent. When attacked they halted, took position, fired to order. There was no haste, no arguing, no hesitation. They were glorious."

In structure, *Colonel Lawrence* is not altogether fortunate. In combining a biography of its subject with a study of the Arabian situation and the desert campaign, its major outline becomes somewhat disjointed. Its preliminary treatment of the Turkish Empire is sketchy. And, though Lawrence may have been justifiedly indignant at the post-War dealings with the Arabs, a fuller study of Middle-Eastern conditions and diplomacy would be more convincing. Suborning treason among the enemy's subjects can never be a business for the fastidious.

As for the strictly biographical portions, I confess to an initial irritation on learning that the subject was called "T. E." in preference to his "adopted surnames –Lawrence, Ross, Shaw, whatever they were". Without wishing to intrude on his privacy, I should like to know what his name really is; or at least why it is kept secret. His enlistment in the Royal Air Force remains –despite the author's long discussion–the eccentric and useless act of an eccentric man.

Liddell Hart's style tends to the florid: his trick of playing on words is unpleasant in large doses; some of his extended metaphors are decidedly jarring; and the theatre of war brings out an unfortunate mixture of mediaeval, classical, and biblical allusion (six dhows and a launch irresistibly remind the author of Aegospotami, and a skirmish becomes a Cannae). Lastly, there is no excuse for the villainous maps with which this (like the great majority of historical and military books) is supplied. Useless diagrams appear in place of desirable maps; the areas are poorly chosen for following the narrative; vital points are omitted from the maps altogether, and different spellings of place names are used in text and plates; the plates are poorly located for the reader's convenience.

JOHN F. FISKE

A Novel in Verse*

MR. Christopher La Farge's *Hoxsie Sells His Acres* is announced by his publishers as "an American novel in verse". The blurb follows up with the assertion that Mr. La Farge, like Stephen Benét and others of his contemporaries, believes "that poetry is particularly suited to the description of human emotions and allows the author a concentration on those emotions and their consequent effects not possible in prose".

It is not often that a publisher's blurb raises a fundamental critical question, as this one does. To frame the question more broadly, it is this: Can the modern verse narrative successfully compete with the prose narrative, or novel, which for a hundred years has shown an increasing tendency to displace it in favour? Or, with a different twist: Have the modern novelists attempted to appropriate effects that are more legitimately attained in verse?

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* HOXSIE SELLS HIS ACRES *by Christopher La Farge* (COWARD-MCCANN. 244 pp. $2.00).

The substance of Mr. La Farge's narrative is the substance of the typical modern novel. Its theme is the effect of the sale of a run-down New England farm upon the lives of a diverse and interesting collection of people. These are divided roughly into two groups. First, there are the natives who belong to the region, but whose feeling for the land has long since had most of the conscious affection washed out of it. It is a fairly mercenary feeling, with little pride of ownership in it. These people are economically "disadvantaged". Hoxsie, the owner of the acres in question, is of this type. The now barren land is his, as it were, by default and force of habit. If he can gain wealth by selling it to summer-resort promoters who will spoil the scenery, what reason has he for hesitating?

The other group are city people, whose decadence comes from an excess of advantage rather than disadvantage. They retreat to the land as to a refuge. They want to prevent the selling of the acres, not because they have a farmer's affection for the land, but because the selling will vulgarize their precious refuge. Naturally their schemes of prevention fail, because their weak aestheticism is helpless against the rough materialism of Hoxsie and his neighbors. Besides, their amorous intrigues, furtively pursued in fence corners and punily contrasting with Hoxsie's open liaison with his housekeeper-cousin, set them at cross purposes among themselves.

It is a good theme of its kind, and Mr. La Farge gets a great deal out of it. What is gained by putting it into verse? Economy, perhaps, if that is a gain. Seven thousand lines of verse, or less than sixty thousand words for a tale that Virginia Woolf or John Cowper Powys would put into a two-decker novel. Besides, Mr. La Farge gets his twenty-odd characters before us in amazingly full proportions. They are excellent New Englanders, especially the natives, and there is a great variety of them. The New England stock and the New England idiom (with which Mr. La Farge achieves interesting results) evidently have possibilities in verse beyond what Mr. Frost and Mr. Robinson have revealed. Furthermore—and this may be no compliment—Mr. La Farge competes successfully with the prose novel on another ground. He manages to convey the impression that the chief pursuit of men and women is sensual love. His characters, rural and urban, married and unmarried, rich and poor, lame and sound, spend much time scheming to seduce or be seduced.

But that is too paltry a basis of judgement. Unless the story comes to us in verse with some memorableness or grandeur or finality that prose cannot attain, we must still say that it might as well have been written in prose. What then are the elements of a preference for verse narrative?

The prose author—and this is increasingly true in a world dominated by science—must always prove his case. That is, he must be highly circumstantial. His story must seem to be history, and must strive to secure assent, as to established fact. He will indulge in ellipsis or rhetoric at great peril.

The poet to a large extent is free from such limitations. Poetry is the kind of statement which does not involve proof. Circumstantiality in poetry is tedium. Rhetoric and ellipsis are among the instruments which poetry is expected to use.

Of course the modern novelist has attempted to transcend his limitations. In so doing he has borrowed some of the instruments of poetry. In modern novels of the "poetic" type there is much ellipsis, and there is much arranging of words purely for effect. But let it be noticed that this is done in the novel only under the sanction of the new science, psychology. The imagery and ellipsis of the modern novel, the technique of association, the plotless, arbitrary, asymmetrical narrative pattern, all this derives authority from "stream of consciousness" theories and the like. The modern novelist, even in his most "poetical" vein, is still engaged in proving his case.

Mr. La Farge seems to have adopted this sanction for his verse narrative. At least he has taken over the method, when he did not need to. Like the novelist he has psychologized his characters. He has followed the nuances of their emotions, and done so in a great variety of metres, handled with remarkable skill and some power. He has added lyrical commentaries, or dramatic choruses. The effect is rich and at times highly convincing. Yet though Mr. La Farge has triumphed, I am forced to believe that on these terms it can only be a moderate triumph, and it is not the particular kind of triumph that we would hope for a revival of verse narrative to attain. We could do with less psychologizing and more forthright narrative. The psychological method is analytical; it breaks down persons into their parts. It leaves doubt and the sense of futility that is a modern substitute for tragedy. But we want a verse narrative that will synthesize, that will put people together into wholes, and make them move with royal human assurance, and take doubt away, and substitute real tragedy for pathos.

Possibly Mr. La Farge has fallen a little short of realizing what his problem was. Yet he has worked so boldly and well that he deserves more than this questioning review can suggest. If our literature is to be refreshed in these doubtful times, the refreshment must come to a large extent from sources and themes provincial or sectional, where the metropolitan disease does not ravage. Mr. La Farge has taken the first step in that direction by turning to the sectional richness of New England, a part of the country that has too long been misrepresented as inhabited entirely by a whining and decadent people. Certain of the more flavoursome of Mr. La Farge's characters suggest that he has found the contrary to be true. But that is only the first step. Already it is clear from the work of some of the leaders of the Southern renascence that it is a distortion to look at sectional materials through urban spectacles. That is a false method and leads nowhere. Mr. La Farge has still to find a verse narrative method that will get clear of the demonstrative analogies of science, and out into the positive sweep of an essentially poetic narrative.

What that narrative should be like is another story. While it stays clear of science, it must also stay clear of the too lyrical methods that have weakened verse narrative since, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the old distinction being lyric form and narrative form broke down. Possibly it will have to be a modern equivalent of "heroic" verse. Only through some such means will Mr. La Farge, or anybody else, be able to achieve poetically what he proposes, in his opening lines, to do:

Praise not nor blame not—but try to recapture the essence,
Tell to your children the story, explain the elusive
Troublesome thing that gives to each word they utter
Something of quality, something of power and dignity.

But the task, especially in the case of rural themes, is not to "explain". Rather we must have a "mythos", speaking boldly for itself and out of itself, with no apology.

DONALD DAVIDSON

The Plain Reader's More*

ON the thirteenth of April four hundred years ago, Sir Thomas More was summoned to appear before the Royal Commissioners to take the oath acknowledging the spiritual supremacy of the King, or refusing it, to begin his passion.

He began the day by receiving Holy Communion. It was his custom on the great days of his life. This was a great day. He said good-bye to his family but would not allow them to follow him nearer to the river than the wicket-gate.—"Deliver us from temptation."—He shut the gate after him, got into Roper's boat, and appeared down-cast as he was rowed down-river. Suddenly he turned to Roper, brightened: "Son Roper, I thank Our Lord the field is won."

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* THOMAS MORE *by Daniel Sargent* (SHEED & WARD. 299 pp. $2.50).

With that decision the human tragedy but divine comedy of Sir Thomas More entered upon the action of its final scenes, while his enemies lengthened their iniquities, to be brought to an end at the chopping-block on the 6th of July, 1535. From that decision, and the need to explain it or on the other side to explain it away, stems every biography of More ever written. Among these Mr. Sargent's book should take the place that it well deserves, as *the* Life for the plain reader.

The difficulties encompassing such a literary achievement as Mr. Sargent's should be pointed out. To write a good popular biography can never be an easy task. It needs too nice a sense of proportion, too exact a measuring of the significance and relative importance of facts, and above all too penetrating an insight both into the motivation of the subject and the understanding of the public, to attract the writer of merely ordinary skill. Sometimes a novelist has those gifts: but the novelist is always open to the professional temptation of caring more for psychologic plausibility than for historical factuality. Sometimes a pedant may have a rigid standard of factual accuracy and may own to a scrupulous regard for historical truth; but a good popular biography demands of him a sacrifice which it is not in him to make—to write his exotic quotations and teeming footnotes and staggering appendices in invisible ink. Now, scholarship is indispensable to the good popular biographer, but it is scholarship that must be worn like a hair-shirt: under the clothes so that the public never sees it and next the skin so that the author never forgets it.

Mr. Sargent brings his notable gifts of measure and perceptiveness to a great subject. It is a subject for which materials abound. There are memoirs by William Roper, Nicholas Harpsfield, William Rastell, and Cresacre More; letters by Erasmus, and numerous other letters and papers of the reign of Henry VIII; calendars of State Papers, Venetian, and of England and Spain, and the Paris News Letter describing the trial and the death; and many writings of Sir Thomas More himself. Turning from those to published materials of another order, there are the appreciations of Stapleton, Barnstaple, Hoddesden, and the counterblasts of Protestant polemists, and the interpretations of late Whig historians. Then there is the More of popular tradition and literary legend —of Shakespeare, of Bacon, of Addison, of Coleridge— and, quite in a class by itself, the poignant and ambiguous figment created by J. R. Green. Among all these the many-sided memory of More is shared and from them the materials of a Life have to be pieced out.

More's life is a touchstone of the biographer's art, a touchstone on which the golden qualities of Roper's *Life* and Harpsfield's *Life* were long ago demonstrated and on which many have since tested their skill. Mr. Sargent's book makes a fresh approach congenial to the plain reader of today. Summarizing the salient characteristics of his subject on the first page, the author remarks:

> But wherever he went during all those years, he was by all whom he met, remarked and remembered, for he had something very rare: a tongue both wonderfully witty and wonderfully friendly. That tongue of his made him

known from Scotland to Hungary. In 1535, when he was fifty-seven he had his head taken off by the order of the King of England, Henry VIII, and from that time on he became equally widely known, not so much for his tongue as for his courage. But there was a quality in him deeper than either his courage or his wit, a quality which bore those other qualities: his shrewdness.

Of course it takes one shrewd man to expound the shrewdness of another. To his possession of that quality many passages of cool and ironic comment warrant Mr. Sargent. Taking that shrewdness, then, as a lamp, he explores the undeviating pilgrimage of More among the labyrinthine ways of Tudor England, with a few excursions to the Continent.

There are twelve chapters to this book, or twelve stages to this pilgrimage. The influence of John More is duly set out, teaching his boy Thomas the skeptical outlook of a City-bred man. Next Thomas is shown in the household of Cardinal Morton, the wary, "earnest and sage". Holt the grammar-master had commended the keen boy to Morton, and in turn Morton sent him from Lambeth Palace—where Mr. Sargent says he was to learn "how to be great by being apprenticed to greatness"—to Canterbury Hall at Oxford. As a Grecian at Oxford and on short allowance from his canny father, More formed close friendships and established the foundation of his reputation as a humanist. Then to New Inn and to Lincoln's Inn, at eighteen, and studies, revels, moot-courts, ponderings on his vacation, and sharp observation of the life about him. With his marriage in 1505 to Jane Holt, with his growing legal practice in behalf of well-to-do merchants and others, with his budding career in the House of Commons, with his literary exercises and his widening repute for wit and soundness, More was well launched into the life that made him one of the chief men of his times.

Mr. Sargent unfolds in successive chapters the absorbing narrative: More's calling, More and Erasmus, More's Household, More and the Temporalty, More and the Spiritualty, The Church's Champion. As these stages of the pilgrimage are recounted, and the brilliant scenes of the City and the Court are laid open—scenes which More saw through and through with his sharp eyes and described with private and quiet words of mordaunt wit and yet, not permitting himself to be dazzled or corrupted by them, moved among with manful dignity and purposefulness—it is made clear that the lines of a tragedy are being set: a tragedy in which the virtuous character and commanding intelligence of More must inevitably come into fatal conflict with a femininely wilful prince and his desires, and with a set of plausible political schemers who were themselves in the grip of blind appetites and passions that they stirred up and could not finally control. Mr. Sargent characterizes these men and the movements of the time, the "background" and antagonists and chorus, dispassionately and wisely, and in the last five chapters of his book draws the lines of tragedy in, with restraint and precision, to the moving final scenes. Tragic as the action appears to be from a humanist's point of view, More himself never gave over to that view of his life and death, never yielded to the facile sentimentalities or to self-pity: it was, for him, his part to play although as one unworthy in the divine comedy. "Think on

His Passion", he had written in a poem long before; he did so, his life long, neither beguiled by fortune nor drawn off from his conviction of the primacy of prime principles; "and therefore tomorrow long I to go to God: it were a day very mete and convenient to me".

So Mr. Sargent has given us Sir Thomas More. More is all there—the boy and the man, the lover and the father and the grandfather, the lawyer and the Chancellor, the private man and the man of affairs, the courtier and the politician, the humanist and the man of letters, the wit and the sobersides, the man of the world and the man of God: all, but integrated in one and that one fused into a flame of heroic love.

ANDREW CORRY

Mr. Mencken's Ethics *

THE avowed purpose of this book is to demonstrate that what the author calls a scientific approach to ethical problems is really possible. Mr. Mencken admits that ethics is a science, and claims that "its frequent pollution by theology should not be permitted to disguise the fact that, at bottom, it deals with realities". Its problems are insistent, he tells us, and there is no denying some of its fundamental postulates. Man is persistently confronted by ethical difficulties. It is Mr. Mencken's contention that man should be able to tackle those difficulties "in a free and enlightened spirit, forgetting what the vague gods

* TREATISE ON RIGHT AND WRONG *by H. L. Mencken* (KNOPF. 331 pp. $3.00).

ordain and concentrating upon what mere man is able to do and in fact does".

From the grandiose title of the book, anyone unused to Mr. Mencken might perhaps expect a comprehensive exposition of the basic postulates of ethics and a philosophical study of the principles of conduct by which men seek to regulate their lives. But Mr. Mencken very adroitly rejects the philosopher's rôle. Outlining his scope, he says in the first page of his preface:

> There is a certain amount of rambling in my exposition. I do not offer a systematic text, and there is no need of one, for many of a high excellence already exist. But it has seemed to me that what has interested me, whether it be important or trivial, may also interest other persons, and so I have gone down a number of side tracks and tried to show what is at the end of them.

We are offered, therefore, a rambling account of the author's conceits in the domain of ethics upon things trivial as well as on matters that are pressing and important. Inevitably there comes to mind Whitehead's description of the progressive force of Reason as the power of going for the penetrating idea, to the exclusion of the relatively trivial. Mr. Mencken lacks the power of going for the penetrating idea, and delights in the trivial and the superficial. Straying blithely along his side tracks, he comes to many an unscholarly conclusion. He tells us, for example, that "practically all of the Early Fathers wrote either Latin or Greek"; leaving us to wonder if there were any Early Fathers who were neither Latin nor Greek. He informs us, too, that "the whole New Testament, as we have it today, was written originally in Greek";

taking no account whatever of the Biblical controversy as to the linguistic origins of the First Gospel. Again, he forgets the memory of William Wilberforce, the Great Emancipator, when he writes that "the men who really launched the long agitation which finally disposed of slavery in Christendom were, in the main, not Christians at all, save, maybe, in name". As matter of history, Wilberforce had the whole Evangelical Revival in England behind him and was ably assisted by the Quakers and the Clapham Sect.

This last is an illustration of how blindly Mr. Mencken may be led by his prejudices, of which, needless to say, he has many. Whenever he writes about religion, and especially when he touches upon questions germane to the history of Christian thought, he invariably gives away his scorn for historical fact. A major example is his treatment of Aristotle and Aquinas respectively. To Aristotle he gives the tribute of unstinted admiration, while he damns Aquinas with the faintest of praise. His account of the historical process by which those two great minds met in the thirteenth century is worth notice, if only for the purpose of correction. Telling us that, in the history of Christian thought, the theology of Jesus and the theology of Paul were rejected by the "intellectual snobs" among the early Christians in favour of "the murkier, vaguer parts of Plato's writings", he leads Aristotle out on the stage with this introduction:

> But after the year 500 Aristotle also began to be heard of in Christendom, and in the long run he was destined to surpass Plato. At the start, unfortunately, only one of his works, the Organon, a treatise on logic, was generally

> known, and that one only in part, but in the course of time the Arabs, who had long been his partisans, began to supply the West with translations (into Latin from the Arabic, from the Syriac, from the Greek!) of his other works, and by 1250 he was widely known and esteemed.
>
> The fruit of the attempt at reconciliation [of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian thought] was Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae, the chief text of the Catholic philosophy ever since. It is in many ways more Aristotelian than Christian.

Now, this notion that the contribution of Aquinas to the history of Western thought lies merely in the fact that Thomism is a revised edition of Aristotelianism is logically untenable. In the words of so competent an authority as Professor A. E. Taylor, the philosophy of Aquinas is a masterly synthesis of both Plato and Aristotle with each other and with St. Augustine, effected by original thought of the first order. Aquinas was not a renegade from the scholastic thought which preceded him, nor was he exclusively an Aristotelian. He saw no irreconcilable contradiction between the Neoplatonic principles, deemed proper by his Christian predecessors in the realm of philosophy for the study of God and of the soul, and the teachings of Aristotle, which he applied particularly to the study of reason and the world of sense. He blended elements borrowed from the old Greek thinkers, from Plato, from Aristotle, even from the Arabs; and he combined them with the Neoplatonism which came into the thirteenth century as part of the stream of the Augustinian tradition. His genius is manifested in the fact that he fashioned his synthesis out of doctrines which had hitherto been divergent.

His originality lay in his elaboration of a philosophical system which joined together the physical and the spiritual worlds harmoniously, relied on sense experience, and proclaimed the disciplinary power of the human Reason.

But to follow Mr. Mencken down all of his side tracks is quite beyond the limits of a brief review. Suffice it to say that, by reason of his contempt of metaphysics, he never remains very long on the high road of ethical inquiry. His book is largely a collection of *obiter dicta* which have little relevance to the thesis he sets out to discuss, and page after page gives evidence of the old Menckenesque pastime of tickling the ears of the groundlings. We find, for example, that "every government, as such, is a scoundrel". We are told that "the late World War was really a trivial episode compared to like events in the past". But the gem of the collection is undoubtedly this: "Certainly it would be hard to imagine such a man as G. K. Chesterton or Hilaire Belloc testifying by affidavit that he believes in the whole body of Catholic doctrine, including all its necessary implications."

Indeed this latest book of Mr. Mencken's should not be taken seriously at all. It is painfully old-fashioned in its prejudices; and, to put it mildly, it adds nothing to his reputation. Never a very profound thinker, he is here egregiously shallow and superficial. Thunderously he discusses the trivial. He rarely, if ever, comes within striking distance of the important.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE